

# THE *LONDONS* OF THE BRITISH FLEET



BY EDWARD FRASER







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THE *LONDONS* OF  
THE BRITISH FLEET

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR.*

**CHAMPIONS OF THE FLEET.  
THE ENEMY AT TRAFALGAR.  
THE ROMANCE OF THE KING'S NAVY.  
FAMOUS FIGHTERS OF THE FLEET.**

ETC. ETC.

# THE *LONDONS* OF THE BRITISH FLEET

HOW THEY FACED THE ENEMY ON  
THE DAY OF BATTLE AND WHAT  
THEIR STORY MEANS FOR US TO-DAY

BY EDWARD FRASER  

WITH 8 ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR  
AND 18 IN BLACK AND WHITE

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

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TO VINE  
AMPHOLIA

## PREFACE

**T**HE interest attaching to the *Londons* of the British Fleet is twofold.

First, there is the interest which belongs to the name itself, because of its direct connection with the capital of the Empire, and as that of a famous group of men-of-war of the Royal Navy. The name, indeed, has a claim of its own on our regard ; instinct with noble and inspiring traditions and many illustrious memories. The man-of-war name *London* belongs to a set of "territorial" names—if the term be permissible—that can boast a notable ancestry, and were the first favourites with the hard-fighting tars of the "Old Navy" from the days of Blake to the days of Rodney, when Nelson was a young post-captain. The associations of such names can be made to have a real and a practical use nowadays. They undoubtedly help in stimulating our general interest in the Royal Navy, and in keeping before us the all-important fact, how "it is on the Navy, under the good Providence of God, that our Wealth, Prosperity, and Peace depend." What the Navy means to the nation can hardly be put more forcibly, indeed, than it has been put by a former

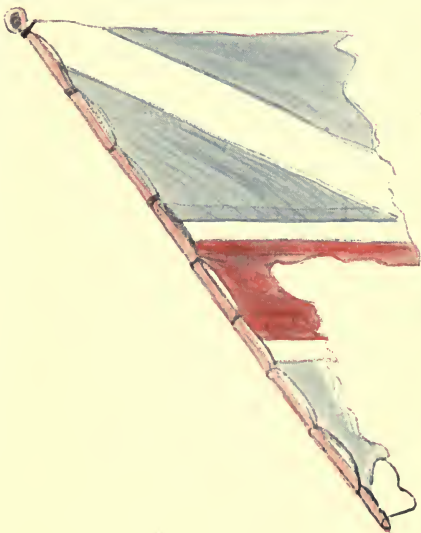
First Lord of the Admiralty in the House of Lords on the 18th of March in this very year :—

“ I believe that our command of the sea is a necessity to this country, and that it is absolutely essential we should hold that command. Our position as a country is very different from that of other countries. . . . We have to bring everything from across the sea. We have to bring our food to our people across the sea, we have to bring our raw material for our manufactures across the sea, and we have to send our manufactures and other exports again across the sea. The great dominions of the King beyond the sea were gained by us through our power on the sea, and it is by the sea that we can defend both them and ourselves. . . . The command of the sea is absolutely necessary for us.”

Secondly, the narrative of events in the careers of the *Londons* of the British Fleet would seem to be pointedly of interest at the present time, when that supremacy at sea, vital to the existence of the British Empire, has been openly challenged, if not indeed menaced, from abroad. It records, as a plain warning, what happened twice to Great Britain in war : once, when readiness to believe any story from abroad which would enable money to be kept back from the fleet lulled those responsible for the national welfare into a sense of false security ; again, when public heedlessness, and party politics, and false ideas of economy, had allowed the Navy in time of peace to fall below our acknowledged standard of numerical superiority over possible enemies. For







JACK, SAID TO BE THAT OF THE *LOYALL LONDON*,  
TORN DOWN BY A DUTCH BOAT AND CARRIED OFF



BLUE ENSIGN TAKEN IN THE MEDWAY: SAID TO BE  
THAT OF THE *LOYALL LONDON*, TORN DOWN BY A  
DUTCH BOAT AND CARRIED OFF

10, viii. '06

THE MEDWAY RAID: THE *LOYALL LONDON*'S FLAGS NOW AT AMSTERDAM

that, on the first occasion, the penalty was national disgrace and humiliation, and the capture and destruction, as they lay at anchor within England's principal naval port of the time, of a number of our best men-of-war. On the second occasion, Great Britain paid the price in the loss of half her then existing Colonial Empire; and in the circumstances the nation was fortunate to get off so lightly. What may not be the price of an unsuccessful naval war for the British Empire next time?

“Lord, turn the hearts of those who prate—

Afraid to dare or spend—

The doctrine of a narrower State,

More easy to defend!

Not this the spirit of our sires,

Who breathed Old Ocean's breath;

Not this our fathers' ancient fires,

Which nought could quench, but death:

Strong are we? make us stronger yet!

Great?—make us greater far!”

Of all the names on the roll of the men-of-war of our National Navy, no other has historic associations so fraught with grave warnings and object-lessons for our common welfare and safety in the circumstances of the present time. Nor could it be more fitting than that it should fall to a *London* to convey the message; to the specially named representative in the British Fleet of the Capital City of the Empire and the nerve-centre of the vast commercial organization by which we live from day to day and on which depends our National and Imperial existence.

It is hoped that this book may, in the story that it tells, be found not only interesting, but also instructive and of use.

E. F.

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THE *LONDONS* OF  
THE BRITISH FLEET

"This martial present, piously designed,  
The Loyal City gave its best lov'd King."  
DRYDEN.

# THE *LONDONS* OF THE BRITISH FLEET

## I

### LONDON AND THE ROYAL NAVY

**T**HE ties of association between London and the Royal Navy are many and varied, and they reach back, in one form or another, a very long way. It is not possible, of course, to recount all in detail at the outset of this narrative, but certain of them may with advantage be enumerated here.

In the very earliest times of which a record exists, before, indeed, there was any royal or national navy at all, London was the head-quarters station of the Roman coast-defence fleet of war-galleys maintained in connection with the chain of stations under the charge of the Count of the Saxon Shore. The victorious fleets of Alfred the Great in the times that followed regularly used London as their main fitting-out and manning base and centre. The "King's ships" of Edward the Confessor's time, which Earl Godwin and Harold led to sea in the continuous war-

fare with the Viking raiders that went on throughout the reign, drew their seamen, it is explicitly stated, from among the "mariners of London," and laid up the ships there after every campaign. "So homeward to London," records the *Saxon Chronicle*, in closing its narrative of one of their cruises against the Norsemen. London also, jointly with the "Five Ports"—as the Cinque Ports federation was called in pre-Norman days—under their earlier organization, provided the picked naval guard, the "Bus-carles," who formed a regular body of sea soldiers in the service of the Crown, specially organized for duty on board the "King's ships." When, in September, 1066, "on the Nativity of our Lady," the fleet which had been lying off the coast of Kent on the watch for the Norman invaders was disbanded, "the ships were sent back to London," whereupon the "Bus-carles" joined the army, to perish almost to a man side by side with Harold in defence of the royal standard on the field of Hastings.

There is, besides, the intimate historic connection between London and the Royal Navy through Trinity House, which dates back indisputably to the Guild of Pilots, Seamen, and Mariners located at Deptford Strond and incorporated by charter from Henry the Eighth in 1512. Indeed, the association probably goes further back still, to the fraternity of "Masters, Rulers, and Mariners of the King's Navy in the Thames," who possessed special rights by licence from Henry the Fifth in return for service on board the King's ships.

Twenty-five "ships of London" served with Edward the Third at the siege of Calais. Three London ships fought with King Edward at the great battle of Sluys—"the Trafalgar of the Middle Ages"—where William Haunsard, ex-Sheriff of London, commanded them, and as contemporary chronicles say, "did much good." And at the battle known as "Espagnols sur Mer," off Winchelsea, at which both King Edward and the Black Prince were in the thickest of the fray, and in other fierce fights at sea in Plantagenet times, ships equipped and paid for by the City of London did their duty with credit side by side with the King's ships and the Cinque Ports fleet.

The City furnished thirty ships, armed and equipped for war and manned by 2130 sailors, to help Queen Elizabeth against the Armada. Others of its ships helped Drake to "sing the King of Spain's beard." Twelve London ships fought with Essex and Raleigh in the grand attack on Cadiz. It was a London ship, the *George Noble*, that alone of all the English fleet off the Azores on that historic August afternoon of 1591, made an effort to stand and help the *Revenge* in her last fight.

A Lord Mayor of London, indeed, as history records, once led an English fleet to battle. In the reign of Richard the Second, when England's naval power had sunk to its very lowest, Sir John Philpot, Lord Mayor of London—whose name is to-day commemorated in Philpot Lane—after appealing in vain to the Crown to protect commerce in the North



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Sea, raised a force of a thousand Thames watermen, paid for out of his own pocket, and equipped a squadron of ships for war service, with which he set out and defeated and captured a pirate squadron of Scottish and Spanish vessels whose depredations had paralysed the oversea trade of the kingdom. In the next year, on King Richard requiring help for an expedition against France, the ex-Lord Mayor presented all his ships as a gift to the Royal Navy. Another Lord Mayor of London, the celebrated banker Sir John Houblon, in the reign of William the Third, was, during his year of office, also one of the Lords of the Admiralty.

London was a regular station for part of the royal fleet under the Plantagenets, and a number of the King's ships had their regular peace-time moorings off the Tower, where, within the Tower precincts, there was a naval storehouse and workshop for naval repairs. The sails and anchors and war equipment of the vessels were kept in the storehouse, and their cannon on Tower Wharf. An order signed on behalf of Henry the Third is in existence, informing the Mayor and Sheriffs of London that owing to a threatened invasion from France, "by reason of the immediate coming of aliens into the realm, the King had pressing need of the galley and great ship which were at London," and they were commanded to cause these vessels to be supplied with men-at-arms and good crossbowmen and sent immediately to Sandwich. The wages of the crews and soldiers were directed to be paid out of the "commons of the



H.M. BATTLESHIP LONDON :—THE QUARTERDECK AND THE COLOURS



THE  
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ROYAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL INSTITUTE

City." The term "Of the Tower," as a fact, was applied as the distinguishing mark for all English men-of-war of the period, just as we nowadays use the term "H.M.S." "Ships of the Tower" (Niefs del Tour) was the official style for the vessels of the King's fleet, the ships being entered individually on the lists as the *Trinity of the Tower*, the *Nicholas of the Tower*, the *Grace Dieu of the Tower*, and so on with all the war craft of various kinds.

As most people know, the Royal Marines to this day possess the distinguished privilege of marching through the City of London with colours flying, bayonets fixed, and band playing. That privilege was granted, there seems little reason to doubt, to commemorate the first raising of the original corps of Marines, the "Admiral's Regiment" of Charles the Second's time, from among the London Trained Bands. Twelve hundred men were raised in London for the Admiral's Regiment within three weeks. The establishment of the City Trained Bands at that time numbered just under ten thousand men, organized in six special regiments of from fourteen hundred to two thousand men each, and known respectively as the Blue, Yellow, Green, Orange, White, and Red regiments, so that there was a large field for the recruiting of the twelve hundred Marines. Through its own "territorial" regiment of regulars also, the "Royal Fusiliers—the City of London Regiment," originally recruited, like the Marines, from the London Trained Bands, London has a connection with the Royal Navy. The regiment served as

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Marines in 1688 in the fleet sent out to prevent William of Orange crossing over; under Admiral Rooke and Sir Cloudesley Shovell in "Queen Anne's War"; again with Sir George Byng, the elder Byng, in 1718, at the naval victory of Cape Passaro in the Straits of Messina; and as marines once more, in 1756, in the fleet with which the second Admiral Byng failed to relieve Minorca.

This, for instance, is something of how Londoners in former times helped to man the British fleet in war. Sixteen per cent, or very nearly that, of the men who fought in Nelson's fleet at Trafalgar, taking one ship with another, were Londoners born, according to the ships' books: drawn from all over the area between Greenwich and Poplar, on either side of the river, and Chelsea, in one direction; and between Islington and Camberwell from north to south. On board the *Victory*, for instance, 115 out of 680 seamen ratings were filled by Londoners, more than one-sixth of the total of the ship's company; nearly twice as many representatives as all Scotland had in the *Victory*, or all Ireland, and seven times as many as Wales furnished for Nelson's flagship. They came from these parishes and districts, according to the *Victory's* muster-book: Rotherhithe and Limehouse, Greenwich, Woolwich, and Deptford, Battersea and Chelsea, Westminster, Camberwell, Kennington, Clapham, Peckham, Lambeth, Southwark, Finsbury, Islington, Battle-bridge (King's Cross), Kentish Town, Wandsworth. There were 75 Londoners with Collingwood on board the

*Royal Sovereign*, 30 on board the "Fighting" *Téméraire*, 40 on board the heroically fought *Belleisle*, which followed Collingwood as his "second" into the battle. The *Trafalgar Revenge* and the *Colossus*, the hardest hit, this last, of all Nelson's ships on that day, were largely manned by Londoners. In the case of the *Colossus*, a seventy-four gun ship, we have also the surgeon's report on the men as they were first entered from the Tower tender. "Among these were a few good men and some stout healthy young men, chiefly watermen, but the greater part had been picked up by the police in London. They were in general ill-clothed, dirty, emaciated, and squalid—consequences to be expected from their habits of life." A poor lot to look at, they helped all the same to carry the *Colossus* through Trafalgar with brilliant distinction, under fire in the very hottest part of the whole battle. They silenced a Spanish eighty-gun ship and captured a French seventy-four, coming off themselves finally with 200 killed and wounded. One man in every three on board the *Colossus*, as a fact, was rendered *hors de combat*.

The watermen of London and the Thames, it is on record, supplied the Royal Navy in the Napoleonic War with over 3000 sturdy fellows, of the best stamp of man-of-war's men, who sailed our ships and fought at the guns, following the lead of Howe and Jervis and Duncan, at the Glorious First of June, at St. Vincent, at Camperdown, and with Nelson at the Nile, at Copenhagen, and at Trafalgar. London does its share in the manning of the

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Navy at the present time also. Last year, for instance, it contributed 2099 recruits out of a total of 8066 raised for the fleet throughout the whole of Great Britain and Ireland.

Then we have this. Eleven of the twenty-seven ships that formed Nelson's line of battle at Trafalgar were London or Thames built ships: four of them launched from the royal dockyards of Woolwich and Deptford, seven built for the Navy in private shipyards—at Blackwall, Gravesend, Rotherhithe, and elsewhere on the river.

No small proportion of our "wooden walls" that won England's empire on the sea were, as a fact, the handiwork of Londoners and Thames-side dockyard men. Eleven of Nelson's thirteen ships at the battle of the Nile were sent afloat on the Thames; seven of them built at private yards. Thirteen of Duncan's sixteen at Camperdown were Thames-built, nine of them in private yards.

During the eighteenth century altogether—counting only ships of the line, vessels of from 60 to 100 guns, and excluding altogether the crowd of frigates and corvettes and smaller fighting craft sent out—the London and Thames yards furnished the fleet with over ninety men-of-war. The private shipyards at Blackwall and Rotherhithe, and at Deptford and Woolwich (not counting the royal dockyards), built from twenty to thirty large men-of-war for Charles the Second, and upwards of twenty for William the Third. More than twenty of Blake's best men-of-war were Thames-built, in private yards,





to build a first-rate for the Royal Navy at its own expense, and did so—the historic *Loyall London*.

At a later day, too, the City was on the point of building, again at its own expense, another first-rate, to be called, as it was proposed, His Majesty's ship *The City of London*. That was to make good to the nation the loss of the *Royal George*. Nowhere, perhaps, from all accounts, was the shock of that catastrophe more severely felt than in London. "The gloom and consternation diffused by the intelligence over the Metropolis," wrote Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, "are hardly to be conceived, and the incredibility of the fact increased the sense of the disaster." The Common Council met and debated the question whether the City should not open a public subscription forthwith "for the purpose of presenting the King with a man-of-war to be called the *City of London*." It was proposed to follow the precedent of 1665. The Corporation, it was announced, would head the list with £10,000. No decision, however, was come to on the details of the scheme; and after that party politics were imported into the proposal, and that delayed the settlement. Then, after several adjournments of the discussion had taken place, just as the final decision was about to be come to, the news of the relief of Gibraltar arrived in England. The end of the war was now plainly in sight, and the Guildhall proposal was first shelved and then laid aside, in the end not to be heard of again.

Elsewhere in this book are told the real facts of



the loss of the *Royal George*; the scandalous and shameful circumstances to which the catastrophe was actually due.

The Navy has never looked in vain for aid or support from London.

At all times the City of London has set an example to the nation, and stood in the forefront in its readiness to show an active interest in the Royal Navy as the main safeguard and bulwark of the nation. During the Napoleonic and American wars, and repeatedly before that, indeed, the Corporation was continually first in showing the way, by opening its purse to help the country's cause by offering bounties to encourage seamen and volunteers to come forward for the manning of our fleets. After Torrington's defeat off Beachy Head, the City Corporation, asked to advance £200,000 to the Crown for the Navy, met the request by holding a special sitting at the Guildhall within twenty-four hours, agreeing by acclamation, *nem. con.*, to the request, subscribing £50,000 of the money on the spot, and guaranteeing the balance within a week. In exactly the same way, on the day after the news of the victory of La Hogue reached Whitehall, the City, in reply to Queen Mary's request for financial aid, placed its purse at the disposal of the Admiralty.

To take up then another link in the old-time chain that forms the bond of association between London and the Fleet. Privately owned *Londons*, built and equipped and manned on the Thames, did notable war service on behalf of the State for some years

before there was a *London* man-of-war in the regular line of the Navy. Cromwell, for a reason of his own, as we shall see, introduced the name to the Navy; but it had already been known on the seas for upwards of forty years before, having been borne by ships owned by the City merchants who formed the East India Company; and two of these *Londons*, in addition, had flown the flag of England with credit in battle. In 1620, a *London* merchantman, the first ship known to have borne the name, with three consorts under her orders, entered Saldanha Bay, at the Cape of Good Hope, and took possession of the neighbouring country in the name of King James the First—an interesting historic fact to South Africans of these times. Five months later this same *London*, with three other Indiamen, fought two fierce battles at the entrance to the Persian Gulf with a Portuguese fleet of greatly superior strength which was attempting to prevent the English East India Company from establishing itself on the Gulf. In the first fight the Indiamen more than held their own and beat the enemy off. In the second, in which Captain Shilling (or Shillinge), Captain of the *London* and Commodore of the squadron, was mortally wounded, the Portuguese fleet was completely routed.

In 1636 another merchantman, the *London*, the second ship to bear the name afloat, equipped as a man-of-war of 40 guns, sailed in Charles the First's "Ship Money" fleet as one of the contingent of ten armed vessels furnished by the City of London

in obedience to the King's precept requiring the Lord Mayor to fit out a squadron for service with the men-of-war of the Royal Navy.

It fell to this same *London's* lot, six years afterwards, to take a part on the historic occasion in July, 1642, when at the outset of the great Civil War the fleet was called on to declare its allegiance. The incident is an interesting one on its own account. The *London*—Captain John Stevens—was attached to the "Summer Guard" for the year, a fleet of sixteen ships, then lying in the Downs. Eleven ships of the sixteen declared for Parliament and against the King. They ran out their guns, weighed anchor and closed round the loyal five, threatening to open fire. On that three of the five lowered their colours and tamely gave in. The Earl of Warwick, who was present, with the Parliament's special commission as Lord High Admiral, next summoned the remaining two to surrender. He gave them an hour to yield themselves up or be sunk. Before the hour was over, however, the crew of the *London* and certain others of Lord Warwick's ships settled the matter out of hand. Without orders they lowered boats and boarded the two ships. Only the officers of the two attempted to make a stand for the King, and they were forcibly disarmed and the two ships taken possession of without bloodshed. The going over of the Navy to Parliament, its transfer of allegiance just then, meant a mortal wound at the outset for the Royal cause. There was no possibility after that of the help from abroad on

which he counted reaching King Charles. The Navy, in fact, "kept the ring" for the entire Civil War. The issue from first to last had to be settled within the limits of the British Isles. King Charles's partisans on the Continent had to remain throughout mere helpless lookers-on.

This same *London*, commanded still by Captain Stevens, ten years later fought with Blake in September, 1652, in his victorious battle against the Dutch off the Kentish Knock shoal, off the mouth of the Thames. It was throughout a close-quarter fight for over four hours, and in it the *London*, according to Blake's official return, fired away thirty-four and a half barrels of gunpowder out of the hundred and sixteen that her magazines held. After that the *London* fought with Monk as one of the ships of the "Red Squadron," the Commander-in-Chief's own personal charge, in the battle with Tromp in the North Sea, off Lowestoft, in June, 1653, and she finally had her share in one of the hardest-fought actions that ever took place at sea, the tremendous battle off Camperdown in July, 1653, when the veteran Dutch admiral met his heroic death.

There is no need to recall at length, how swords of honour,<sup>1</sup> and the City Freedom, and gold boxes, have

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the City practice of presenting a sword of honour came into vogue, as it were, accidentally; in the first instance as a supplementary presentation. Originally it was the custom, when a hero of peace or of war received the honorary Freedom of the City, to accompany the formal parchment with a costly box, either of gold or of "heart of oak," richly embellished. Thus, in 1794, when Admiral Sir John Jervis (afterwards Earl St. Vincent) distinguished himself in the West Indies, the Freedom of





H.M. BATTLESHIP *LONDON*.—IN THE CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

TO THE  
HONORABLE  
MEMBERS OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

been London's mark of appreciation for the admirals who led our fleets to victory, together with cordially worded votes of thanks to their captains and officers and men, and liberal contributions for the widows and the orphans. London gave its highest honours to Nelson and Collingwood, and Earl Northesk, the three Trafalgar admirals; the two Camperdown admirals, Duncan and Sir Richard Onslow; St. Vincent, Howe, Rodney, Hood, Keppel, Hawke, Vernon, Keith, Saumarez, Dundonald, Captain Hardy of the *Victory*, Lord Exmouth, Sir Sidney Smith, "the hero of Acre," Broke of the *Shannon*, Lord Lyons—there is no need to mention more names; none, practically, have ever been left out.

At St. Paul's Cross, on the 8th of September, 1588, the public thanksgiving service was held for the defeat of the Spanish Armada. It was in St. Paul's, in old St. Paul's, on the 24th of November, that Queen Elizabeth attended in full state with the Lords of the Council to render the

the City and a gold box were voted to him by the Common Council. Three years later Sir John Jervis won the famous sea victory of St. Vincent. The Corporation, desirous of doing him further honour, and finding themselves precluded from voting him the freedom and gold box a second time, resolved to give him instead a sword of the value of two hundred guineas. That decision was communicated to Lord St. Vincent abroad, and his reply is dated "*Victory*, in the Tagus, 28 March, 1797." He wrote to the Lord Mayor in these terms:—

"The sword they (the Corporation) intend to honour me with I shall prize beyond expression, and be at all times ready to draw in defence of the rights and privileges of my fellow citizens, in the list of whom the flag officers under my command are proud to be enrolled."

So the practice was initiated.



Sovereign's own thanks to Almighty God for having saved England; while outside, round the lower battlements of the cathedral, waved the eleven Spanish ensigns and banners that the English fleet had captured from the enemy. It was in St. Paul's that George the Third and Queen Charlotte and the Royal Princes, accompanied by sixteen admirals, including Nelson and Duncan, attended for the special naval Service of Thanksgiving for the victories of the Revolutionary War, and to witness the presentation to the cathedral of the trophies won on the "Glorious First of June," at St. Vincent and at Camperdown. It was in St. Paul's also that the Trafalgar trophies were laid up.

The City holds at the Guildhall as a treasured personal gift from Nelson the sword of the enemy's second in command, and the senior surviving French admiral, at the battle of the Nile. And the world knows who lies buried within the City precincts, in the Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral, with Collingwood and Lord Northesk on either side of him.

The City of London claimed and took its full share in rendering honour to the dead Nelson at his funeral. Eight of the Livery Companies' barges took part in the river procession with the body from Greenwich Hospital to St. Paul's; those of the Drapers, Fishmongers, Goldsmiths, Skinners, Merchant Taylors, Ironmongers, Stationers, and Apothecaries. There were too the state barge of the City Corporation and the Lord Mayor's barge, which had its place immediately astern of the

Royal barge and the Admiralty barge. At Nelson's funeral in St. Paul's, the Lord Mayor met the state procession at Temple Bar, and rode in it, with precedence as though the King was present in person ; between the Prince of Wales's carriage and the funeral car.

London also—the City and Westminster and Greater London alike—holds the dust of not a few of the bravest and noblest of those, who in their day did their best to uphold at sea all the world over the honour of the British flag. Admiral Sir John Lawson, one of Blake's followers, and a captain and admiral on board our first *London* man-of-war, lies buried in St. Dunstan's, Stepney. In the same church lie entombed the remains of Queen Anne's famous admiral, Sir John Leake, who also flew his flag in another *London*, and of Sir Thomas Spert, first Master of the Corporation of Trinity House, Comptroller of the Navy to Henry the Eighth, and captain of the historic *Great Harry*. Sir John Hawkins also, Drake's friend and brother-admiral of Queen Elizabeth's Navy, the captain of the *Victory* in the fighting with the Spanish Armada, has his monument in St. Dunstan's. Captain Edward Fenton, captain of the flagship *Ark Royal* in the battles with the Armada ; Admiral Sir Richard Hughes ; Benbow's pupil, Captain Shelvocke, the circumnavigator ; and Admiral Hozier are among the many gallant seamen of note whose remains lie at St. Nicholas's, Deptford. Sir Christopher Myngs, bravest of

the brave among the officers of the Navy of the Restoration,

The chain-shot swings,  
And the grape-shot rings,  
Ever fiercest of all fights Sir Christopher Myngs,

has his grave in one of the City churches.

The remains of Parker, the Nore mutineer, are in St. Mary's, Whitechapel. Dr. Beatty, the surgeon of the *Victory* at Trafalgar, lies in Kensal Green. "Nelson's Hardy" lies in the mausoleum of Greenwich Hospital. Sir Richard King, that sturdy veteran of the battles with that fiercest of French fighters, the Bailli de Suffren, in the East Indies, is buried in Marylebone Parish Church.

In St. Margaret's, Westminster, are the graves of Sir Walter Raleigh—laid to rest beneath the Altar—and of the heroic Sir Peter Parker of the *Mene-laüs*, to whose memory Byron penned his touching tribute :—

There is a tear for all who die,  
A mourner o'er the humblest grave ;  
But nations swell the funeral cry,  
And Triumph weeps above the brave !

Within the churchyard enclosure of St. Margaret's—somewhere there—lie the bones of Admiral Blake and his fellow "General at Sea" the stout-hearted Richard Deane, who fell in the battle with the Dutch and was laid to rest in the Abbey with the utmost pomp and ceremony that the Commonwealth authorities could devise. His remains, together with those of Blake, were disinterred at the Restora-

tion—that senseless and vile act of callous, vindictive savagery—and flung, together with the corpses of the regicides, into a common pit dug in the burial-ground round St. Margaret's, where they lie now. A memorial window to Admiral Blake, unveiled by Lord Charles Beresford, now preserves his memory at St. Margaret's.

Within the Abbey itself rests the dust of twenty admirals and leaders at sea, including that of one of the three English sovereigns who commanded a fleet in battle, Edward the Third. Blake was laid to his rest there at first, “with all the solemnity possible, interred in Henry VII's chapel among the monuments of the Kings.” Deane and Popham, Blake's two fellow “Generals at Sea” were likewise, in the first instance, interred within Westminster Abbey. There, too, is the grave of Blake's other “partner,” as he called him, George Monk, first Duke of Albemarle, the great admiral of the Restoration Navy; and of yet another of Blake's companions-in-arms, Edward Montagu, first Earl of Sandwich, who met his heroic death in action, in the blowing up of his flagship at the battle of Solebay. Prince Rupert, who led the British fleet in five battles, lies also in the Abbey; also Admiral Sir William Berkeley, killed in the “Four Days' Fight” of June, 1666; the bold and impetuous Admiral Sir Edward Spragge, whose flag flew at the masthead of a *London* in battle; Sir Cloudesley Shovel; and Lord Cochrane. Admiral Vernon, Sir George Pocock, Sir Charles Wager,



Sir Peter Warren, are others of the better-remembered names of British admirals, now at peace for evermore within the Abbey walls, sleeping "the dreamless sleep that wraps the mighty dead." Ten captains and lieutenants of the Royal Navy besides, killed in battle in the North Sea in the second Dutch War, have their graves in Westminster Abbey. Nine admirals whose bones lie elsewhere are commemorated by monuments. Kempenfeldt, who went down in the *Royal George*, is one. Admiral Charles Watson, the avenger of the Black Hole, whose remains lie in the graveyard of St. John's Cathedral at Calcutta, is another. Yet another is Admiral Balchen, lost in the terrible catastrophe of the *Victory* in George the Second's time. Twelve naval captains who fell in battle have monuments in the Abbey, and one naval captain, Sir John Franklin—signal midshipman on board the famous "*Billy Ruff'n*" at Trafalgar—has his memorial at Westminster as an Arctic explorer.

In St. Paul's only our three Trafalgar admirals lie entombed—Nelson, Collingwood, and Lord Northesk. There are national memorials in St. Paul's to twenty admirals and captains altogether, in memory mostly of men who gave their lives for England in battle. "The gallant good Riou," who fell at Copenhagen, and Captain Mosse of the *Monarch*, who met his death on that same April forenoon, are both commemorated in St. Paul's. Captains Duff of the *Mars* and Cooke of the *Bellerophon*, who fell at Trafalgar; Westcott of the *Majestic*, killed at the



SILVER TROPHY SHIELD, PRESENTED TO H.M. BATTLESHIP *LONDON* BY THE LORD  
MAYOR AND CITIZENS OF LONDON—1905

*From a photograph kindly placed at the Author's disposal by the designers and manufacturers  
of the Trophy, Messrs. George Kenning & Sons, Little Britain, E.C.*





Nile ; Burgess of the *Ardent*, who fell at Camperdown ; Captain Faulknor, struck down while lashing his ship to the enemy in the heroic duel of the *Blanche* and *Pique* ; Captain Lyons of the *Miranda*, killed in the Black Sea during the Crimean War, are among the naval heroes who have monuments in the cathedral. Rodney has his monument in St. Paul's, the first of all placed there ; also Earl St. Vincent, the "organizer of victory" ; Lord Howe, and Duncan of Camperdown ; and there is a monument to Nelson and one to Collingwood as well.

In and about London there are to be met with, here and there, a number of naval mementos of historic interest. In St. James's Square is a naval relic, in the form of four cannon from ships taken in battle by the famous Admiral Boscawen, erected, muzzle upwards, by the edge of the pavement facing the town house of Viscount Falmouth, the head of the Boscawen family. They have stood there for over a century and a half. Cannon captured at the Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar, melted down, form the bronze of the capital of the Nelson column in Trafalgar Square. Heart of oak from the timbers of the "Fighting" *Téméraire* furnished the materials for the sanctuary rails, chair, and Communion Table of a London riverside church, St. Paul's, Rotherhithe. Vigo Street, off Regent Street, takes its name from a once famous naval victory, won in Queen Anne's reign just when the street was being first laid out. In the quadrangle of Greenwich Hospital stands Rysbrach's statue of George the Second, carved, so

the inscription on the pedestal sets forth, from a block of marble captured at sea from the French by Sir George Rooke, while in transit to be carved into a statue of Louis the Fourteenth. At the Tower are two brass cannon taken by Rooke at Vigo in 1702; all that is left since the great Tower fire of 1841, when several trophies were destroyed. At the Royal United Service Institution in Whitehall among other naval trophies are the sword of Admiral Villeneuve and other swords taken at Trafalgar; five French Revolutionary flags taken in Corsica by Hood and Nelson; the bell and lantern and quarter-deck clock-face of the *Ville de Paris* taken by Rodney; the main-royal-masthead of the great three-decker flagship *l'Orient*, blown up at the battle of the Nile. In the College Hall of Westminster School are tables of chestnut wood, traditionally said to be from wrecks of some of the ships of the Spanish Armada, and to have been presented to the school by Queen Elizabeth herself. Westminster School indeed, for itself, may claim to have sent into the Royal Navy, in the fighting days of old, more officers than any other of our great public schools. It was an "old Westminster," Eliab Harvey, to take one name only at random, who so gallantly captained the "Fighting" *Téméraire* at Trafalgar. The connection between the Navy and Christ's Hospital, in the days when it was a London school, is of course historic.

To conclude this summary, we pass now to recent times and recent events. Our fine modern battleship the *London*, of King Edward's fleet, has associations of her own with the City of London, and associations of a very interesting kind.

The late Lord Goschen, when First Lord of the Admiralty, appointed the name avowedly as a compliment to the City of London, by way of return for a unique mark of attention paid by the then Lord Mayor to the Royal Navy. On the 29th of June, 1898, the Lord Mayor of London (Sir Horatio Davies), for the first time in the annals of the City Corporation, officially entertained representatives of the Royal Navy at a banquet at the Mansion House. The guests included the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Sea Lords, and between three and four hundred naval officers, representatives of all ranks of the service, senior and junior, and of all branches and departments : veteran officers on the retired list, and officers from the Channel and Mediterranean fleets ; "forty pennants," as Lord Goschen, in responding to the toast of the evening, put it ; together with others recently arrived home from service in all parts of the world. On the 19th of the following August, when the names of the new battleships for the year were publicly announced, at the head of them stood the name *London* for the ship that it was intended to lay down at Portsmouth.

The keel-plate of the *London* was laid on the 8th of December, 1898, and the ship was launched on the 21st of September, 1899.

The Mansion House banquet, however, does not close the account. Not the least interesting civic event of the centenary year of Trafalgar was the subscription for a presentation to be made to our modern battleship the *London* by a number of public-spirited citizens of London, headed by Sir John Pound, the then Lord Mayor, and certain of the Livery Companies. The presentation was to comprise certain special gifts, its declared object being to keep alive the memory of the historic association between the City of London and the *London* man-of-war. Incidentally it was designed, further, to help in stimulating public interest in the Navy, as being, in the words of the preamble to Queen Elizabeth's regulations for "the Office of the Admiralty and Marine Causes," "one of the Chiefest Defences of Us and Our Realm against the Malice of any foreign potentate."

Lord Mayor Sir John Pound contributed personally to the fund, also the Sheriffs of his year, the Duke of Fife (Lord-Lieutenant of London), Lord Derby, Lord Strathcona, the Duke of Westminster, Alderman Vaughan Morgan, Lord Mount-Stephen, the Rothschilds, and the Grocers' Company, the Clothworkers' Company, the Leather-sellers' Company, the Skinners' Company, the Fishmongers' Company, the Salters' Company, and various City guilds, most of which, as will be seen—it is an interesting historic fact—had contributed towards the building of the *Loyall London* man-of-war of two and a half centuries before. A number



of business houses and firms in the City, and bankers and private individuals, gave donations as well, and the amount received made up a handsome total, enabling a presentation not unworthy of the City of London to be made to the ship that bears the City's name.

The presentation comprised these five separate gifts.

The first consisted of a magnificent model in silver of the White Tower in the Tower of London, together with a pair of handsome dishes in solid silver, bearing as the principal feature of the design the City dragon finely wrought. The selection of the White Tower was made in response to a request from the Guildhall to the captain and officers of the *London* as to the form they would prefer the presentation to take. Their wish for a model of the White Tower was fulfilled in a piece of work remarkable for its workmanship and fidelity to detail, and made to the scale of the historic buildings. The model, indeed, took a full year to complete. The base is of oak, supported by silver dolphins at each corner, together with scroll-work, and the front bears a silver plate with the inscription: "Presented to the Captain and Officers of H.M.S. *London*, 1905-6."

The second gift took the form of a very finely designed and chased silver challenge-shield, to be competed for at big-gun practice annually, the names of the best shooting crew on board to be inscribed on it each year—the highest form of en-

couragement possible. The presentation of plate and the shield were both, by royal command, taken to Buckingham Palace and inspected by the King before going to the ship, and His Majesty expressed his warm approval of both the intention of the gifts and the workmanship.

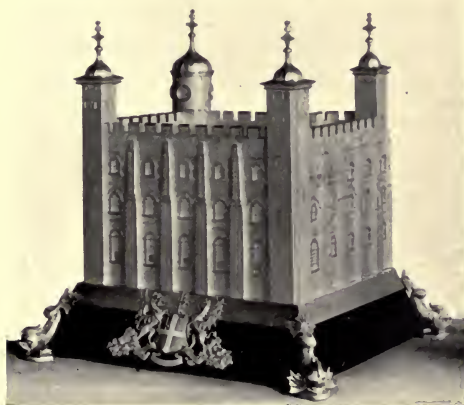
The third gift was a silken ensign, and the fourth a ship's bell, modelled from one of the historic Bow Bells of London, with chaste silver brackets, and weighing half a ton. A cheque for £260 to be distributed in minor gunnery prizes was added as a supplementary gift.

In addition, the Mercers' Company, senior of the City companies and the first City company to lead the way in 1665 in the building of the old *Loyall London*, presented to the officers of the *London* on their own account three silver cups, copies of historic loving-cups in possession of the company.

The ceremony with which the actual presentation to the *London* was made was in keeping with the fine gift and the patriotic sentiment that it was intended to convey. It took place at sea, in the Mediterranean, off Malta, on Sunday the 16th of December, 1906, and Lord Charles Beresford himself, the Commander-in-Chief, went on board the *London* in state to make the presentation on behalf of the Lord Mayor and City of London.

After inspecting the *London* and the men, Lord Charles delivered an address, in which he dwelt on the great part played by the citizens of London in times past in the establishment of British sea power.





SHIP'S BELL AND SILVER MODEL OF THE WHITE TOWER,  
PRESENTED TO H.M. BATTLESHIP LONDON BY THE LORD  
MAYOR AND CITIZENS OF LONDON—1905  
*From photographs kindly placed at the Author's disposal by  
Messrs. Mappin and Webb and the Goldsmiths and  
Silversmiths Co. Ltd.*



The Admiral began his speech by saying what he thought of the *London's* men whom he saw before him.

"It has particularly pleased me," he said at the outset, "to see that the men looked me straight in the face. Men should always look their officers in the eye, and stand up and be proud of themselves."

Lord Charles then, in the name of the Lord Mayor and the City of London, handed over the gifts, which stood displayed on the quarter-deck for all to see.

"I have come on board in state, with my flag flying," he said, "to present the presents given by the Lord Mayor (Sir John Pound) and the citizens of London to His Majesty's ship *London*. I have always come in state on these occasions, because it is as well that it should be known that the Navy appreciates the gifts presented to ships named after British towns and counties. It is also necessary to come on board in state to pay a proper and courteous compliment to those who have interested themselves in individual ships of the fleet. Upon the discipline and loyalty of the officers, and the discipline and loyalty of the men to their officers, depends the efficiency of the fleet. Upon the efficiency of the fleet depend the welfare of our people, the protection of our trade and commerce, and, indeed, the life of our Empire."

Lord Charles Beresford proceeded to give a brief historical narrative of the associations of the City of

London with the Royal Navy from the days of King Alfred to the present time.

“The citizens of London,” he said, in concluding his address, “are as mindful now of the fleet as they were in the old days, and have testified to this by sending His Majesty’s ship *London* the magnificent presents we see before us on the capstan-head. On the part of the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London, 1904–5 (Sir John Pound), and the citizens of London, I present these very handsome gifts for His Majesty’s ship *London* to Captain Wilkinson, the officers, petty officers, non-commissioned officers, and the ship’s company. On the part of Sir John Pound and the citizens of London, I wish His Majesty’s ship *London*, and all on board, God-speed and good luck, and that the same hearty wishes may be extended to future men-of-war of that name and all who may serve in them. The citizens of London will watch the career and life of this ship and her successors to the name with sympathetic interest, knowing that, if opportunity occurs, His Majesty’s ship *London* will add to the brilliant records and traditions of the British fleet; confident that the *London* will uphold the dignity and prestige of her name, and be a credit to herself, the fleet in which she may serve, and the whole British Navy. On the part of Captain Wilkinson, officers, petty officers, non-commissioned officers, and the ship’s company of His Majesty’s ship *London*, I shall assure the Lord Mayor and the citizens of London that this ship will keep up the splendid traditions of the British fleet,

and whether it be under the dull routine of peace, or the more thrilling, exciting, and exacting time of war, the *London* will be found to do her duty loyally to the country, and to the name which she is proud to bear."

Lord Charles Beresford concluded by announcing the first names to be inscribed on "the *London* gunnery shield of honour"—those of Petty Officer of the First Class Frederick Godfrey and Sergeant Graystone of the Royal Marine Artillery—warmly congratulating the men, and adding: "I am very glad to see that the Bluejacket and the Marine are both represented!"

After that the Admiral read the "deed of gift" accompanying the presents, and personally hoisted the silk ensign. Meanwhile the guard presented arms and the band played the National Anthem, while the officers and ship's company all stood at attention and formally saluted the *London's* battle flag.

The present time, too, is further interesting in the annals of both the Royal Navy and of the *London* man-of-war in connection with a recent incident. For the first time in history the Lord Mayor of London and the Corporation have been invited to pay a visit in state to the warship that bears the name of the first city of the world, and the recent invitation has been accepted, to be complied with at a fitting opportunity.

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Exactly two hundred and fifty-one years have gone by since that forenoon on the Thames off Deptford Dockyard, when our first *London* man-of-war hoisted her first pennant as a commissioned ship of the fleet of England. Two hundred and fifty-one years full of historic interest, and events and incidental happenings of many kinds they are ; two and a half centuries of doings and adventures and strange vicissitudes, of glimpses behind the scenes and in the background of fame, as well on shore as in the presence of the enemy at sea. His Majesty King Edward the Seventh's battleship the *London*, in her name, carries us back all that way into our national history.

Were it permissible for the battleship *London* of King Edward's fleet to display a ship's colour of her own, on the pattern of the regimental flags of the British Army, these would be some of the war-service "honours" that the *London's* colour would display :—

|                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| With Blake off the North Foreland .  | Sept., 1652 |
| „ Blake and Monk off Lowestoft .     | June, 1653  |
| „ Monk off Camperdown . .            | July, 1653  |
| „ St. James's Day Fight . .          | July, 1666  |
| „ the Duke of York at Solebay .      | May, 1672   |
| „ Prince Rupert against De Ruyter    | May, 1673   |
| „ „ „ „                              | June, 1673  |
| „ „ „ „                              | Aug., 1673  |
| Battle of Barfleur—La Hogue . .      | May, 1692   |
| Action off Cape Henry . . .          | Mar., 1781  |
| Graves's action off the Chesapeake . | Sept., 1781 |



|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| Engagement with <i>Scipion</i> and <i>Sybille</i> . | Oct., 1782  |
| With Lord Bridport off Belleisle .                  | July, 1795  |
| Copenhagen . . . . .                                | April, 1801 |
| Capture of <i>Marengo</i> . . . . .                 | April, 1806 |
| Bombardment of Sebastopol . . .                     | Oct., 1854  |

The story opens in Cromwell's council chamber, and the first guns fired by our first *London* man-of-war went off as a funeral salute to Admiral Blake's half-masted flag, as Blake's dead body was being borne on board the *St. George* past Dover Castle on the way to Westminster Abbey. The *London's*, in fact, was the last salute at sea that English man-of-war ever rendered to Robert Blake.

## II

### WHY CROMWELL CHOSE THE NAME

**W**E owe the appearance of the name *London* on the roll of the British fleet to no less a personage than Cromwell.

The appointment of this particular name to a man-of-war was Cromwell's own idea. And it was given, there seems no occasion to doubt, for a definite purpose, for certain reasons of Cromwell's own.

The story opens with a paragraph in an old Commonwealth newspaper—*Mercurius Politicus*, No. 320, published on Thursday, July 31st, 1656:—

“July 30. The Commissioners of the Admiralty have been for some time at Chatham to take care of the affairs of the Navy. They have launched a lusty ship of the second rate named the *London*, carrying 60 great Guns.”

Cromwell chose the name for the “lusty ship” a fortnight before.

On the 16th of July Commissioner Pett, the officer in charge of Chatham Dockyard, had sent a memorandum to the Admiralty Committee of the Council of



HIS MAJESTY'S FIRST CLASS BATTLESHIP *LOANIX*  
*Photo by Stephen Critch, Southsea*



State about the ship, which had hitherto been known as "the new Second Rate building at Chatham." "As the new 2nd rate ship will be ready to launch on Saturday week," wrote Mr. Pett, "I want a warrant to the Navy Commissioners and a name for the ship, unless some of you Commissioners intend to be present." The Admiralty Committee laid the matter before Cromwell, for him to appoint the name. As head of the State it lay with Cromwell to decide on the names for new men-of-war, either by accepting suggestions from the Admiralty Committee, or by choosing for himself. This was an old privilege of royalty taken over by the Lord Protector, and one which Cromwell, as it would appear, took some interest in exercising. The name for "the new 2nd rate at Chatham" was fixed on by Cromwell at the meeting of the Council of State on the 18th of July, and next morning the Admiralty Committee wrote formally directing the Navy Office on Tower Hill—the department that managed dockyard affairs—to issue the official warrant to Commissioner Pett "for launching the new 2nd Rate which has been named the *London*."

Mr. Pett was also informed that the entire Board of Admiralty—the "you Commissioners" of his own letter—proposed to attend at Chatham on the occasion, to name the ship in due form. That notification probably did not give Mr. Pett's economical mind entire gratification. It meant, for one thing, that there would be an official banquet on a large scale in celebration of the launch, for which banquet,



he, Mr. Pett, would have to pay three-fourths of the expense out of his own pocket. Even in those times of the Puritan *régime* it was customary to celebrate the occasion of the sending afloat of a new man-of-war by eating and drinking, and holding a general dockyard jollification, as had been the naval practice in the unregenerate days of old.

Why did Cromwell, in that summer of 1656, appoint the name *London* for a man-of-war? It is a rather curious point.

It was a new departure. The names of many cities and towns—and of villages as well—in England (and some in Scotland and Ireland) had during the past six years been placed on the Navy List of the Commonwealth for certain men-of-war, but in all these cases the intention of the names had been obvious.

No fewer, in fact, than fifty-one scenes and occasions of bloodshed in the Civil War, petty skirmishes and battles alike, were commemorated by exultant Puritanism in the names of English men-of-war, as much apparently by way of deliberate malice as for any other reason. These were some of those selected. Naseby was at the head of the list:—

The Man of Blood was there, with his long essencèd hair,  
And Astley and Sir Marmaduke and Rupert of the Rhine.

Cromwell himself attended in state at the launch of the *Naseby*, riding down specially for it to Woolwich, with a Lifeguard escort; and the ship's figurehead represented the Lord Protector on horse-

back, trampling down human figures designed to represent, among others, Englishmen and Scotsmen and Irishmen, typical of the unfortunate Royalists. So Evelyn relates.<sup>1</sup> Worcester, of "crowning mercy" fame, was another name. It is from Cromwell's *Worcester* that our present-day Thames training-ship the *Worcester* takes the name. Langport in Somerset and Bradford in Yorkshire, Newcastle, Nantwich, and Newark, scenes of Royalist defeat, were other names given to men-of-war; also Winsby in Lincolnshire (to this day, locally, the ugly memory of "Winceby Fight" is kept alive in "Slash Lane," hard by the battlefield); Basing and Cheriton, to commemorate the Hampshire battlefield of Cheri-

<sup>1</sup> The Admiralty Committee of the Council of State proposed first of all to call the ship after Cromwell himself, or alternatively, the *Lord Protector*. When the order for the launch was issued, they, as a matter of routine, laid the suggested names before Cromwell, with an invitation to attend the launching in person. Cromwell, however, had his doubts as to the policy of letting his name or office so figure. He was well aware that the political leanings of the Sea-Service were by no means on the side of the dominant party on land. It was thus, by an eleventh-hour alteration as it befell, that no English man-of-war ever bore

"the iron name  
Of him who doomed his King to die."

The emblematical figurehead for the ship, as originally designed, had, however, been already carved and set up in place. It was allowed to remain. Evelyn describes it in his *Diary* as he saw it at the launch of the *Naseby* :—

"9 April, 1655.—I went to see the greate ship newly built by the Usurper Oliver, carrying 96 brasse guns and 1000 tons burthen. On the prow was Oliver on horseback, trampling 6 Nations under foote; a Scott, Irishman, Dutchman, Frenchman, Spaniard, and English; as was easily made out by their several habits. A Fame held a laurel over his insulting head, the word *God with us*."

ton Down; Wexford, and Tredagh—to commemorate the massacre at Drogheda (Tredagh was what they called Drogheda then). There was a *Wakefield* man-of-war, a *Gainsborough*, a *Plymouth*, in memory of the siege; a *Lyme*, *Selby*, *Bridgewater*, *Taunton*; an *Oxford* and an *Islip*. A *Dunbar* kept alive the memory of an event hardly yet forgotten across the Scottish border. Grantham, where the newly raised Ironsides fleshed their maiden swords, Colonel Cromwell in person leading them on, stood commemorated on the Navy List; also Maidstone, the scene of Fairfax's day of settlement with the "Kentish Rising"; Fagons and Pembroke, scenes of bloodshed in South Wales; Preston, the scene of another of Cromwell's smashing blows; Colchester, where the end came with all the bitterness and humiliation of final overthrow, and with the headsman's axe in the background for one of the noblest of the Cavaliers; Black Torrington, within hearing of the Severn Sea; and that dread field of brothers' slaughter, merciless Marston Moor.

All these names—mostly of Cromwell's own selection as a fact—had been given vindictively; of set purpose to offend. The Puritan authorities consistently set themselves to be objectionable to those who differed from them. It is on record, for instance, how they compelled certain colleges of ultra-Royalist and High Church Oxford to keep the anniversary of King Charles's final overthrow at Naseby by a banquet on a Friday at which no fish was to be eaten, followed by "bonfires" in the evening. The

names given to the Commonwealth men-of-war were intended as a deterrent to the Royalists throughout the country ; as a reminder who were the masters of their lives and liberties. There was no mistaking what predominant Puritanism meant by placing such names on the Navy List. With the name *London*, however, the case was different.

Cromwell undoubtedly intended the name as a compliment to the City of London. The City had shown itself throughout well affected to the existing *régime*. It had ever been, as far as the Lord Protector was personally concerned, ostentatiously friendly. It had presented him with plate after Naseby. It had fêted him after Worcester. It had received him with almost regal state and banqueted him on his being proclaimed Lord Protector. Cromwell, though, at that particular moment, had, it is more than probable, something else in his mind besides paying a compliment to the City of London. The Lord Protector was not a man to pay innocent compliments. Cromwell had motives of policy, and a purpose of his own, at the same time that he was polite to the City of London. The General Election for the Second Parliament of the Protectorate was at that moment only three weeks off. Issues of the very highest importance to Cromwell's personal policy would hinge on the mood and disposition of the new House of Commons. To the new Parliament London and Middlesex would be sending six members. Twelve votes on a division, where the voting was likely to be close, were worth secur-



ing. At the same time Cromwell had reason to know that the City Fathers had felt sore at the rough tone he had recently employed to them, when addressing them on the subject of their non-discovery of a recent Royalist plot which had been hatched within the City and had not been discovered until the conspirators had got safely beyond reach. These coincidences go some way towards making it appear certain that it was not simply a casual thought of being complimentary to the City of London that induced Cromwell, on the 18th of July, 1656, to direct the name *London* to be given for the first time a place on the roll of the fleet of England.

This, too, is of interest incidentally.

Our first *London* man-of-war came into existence just at the moment when the Navy of Blake's day had attained its highest point in power and efficiency. It was just at the time when Cromwell was laying down for the world in general the cardinal principle of his national policy. The air was still ringing with the words of the Protector's great Declaration, words that it may be hoped have not lost their meaning yet: "I will make the name of Englishman to be as much dreaded as was ever the name of Roman citizen." In the year that the *London* man-of-war came into being, 1656, Cromwell was taking steps to make good his words, and, as a matter of national insurance, was spending on the Navy £809,000 out of the total National Revenue of just £1,050,000—four-fifths, that is, of the total re-



venue of England at that period. It is equivalent to a proportionate expenditure, nowadays—to an annual Navy Estimate—of between £80,000,000 and £90,000,000, between eighty and ninety millions sterling.

### III

#### A VISIT TO OUR FIRST *LONDON*

**W**HAT did our first *London* look like? That, as it happens, is a question that is not hard to answer. Dock-yard officials under the Commonwealth were mostly a methodical and careful set of men. They put down details laboriously in black and white, kept their papers in good order, and filed them. Some of these papers are in existence still, and in particular three documents which refer to the *London* man-of-war. Practically complete details about the *London*, indeed, are at the present time extant among certain manuscripts at the British Museum. They include, among other things, the original estimates and official instructions particularizing how the ship was to be painted, and as to the carving and joinery work to be done on board, and its cost. With the aid of these, the following attempt is made at giving an eyewitness's account of a visit to the *London*, such as might well have taken place on any day in April, 1657, or in the first week in May, when the new *London* was lying in the Hope below Gravesend fitted

out for her first service as flagship of the fleet in the Downs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The fitting out of the *London* had been ordered to meet a sudden emergency. It was war time, of course. Cromwell's war with Spain, begun by Penn's attack on Hispaniola and the seizure of Jamaica, had been going on for two years. Blake's fleet also was at that moment returning to the coast of Spain after destroying the galleons in the Bay of Santa Cruz. The order to send the *London* to sea had, however, to do with a matter nearer home. Details had reached the Council of State of a dangerous Royalist plot against Lord Protector Cromwell and the Government. A formidable invasion was reported to be in preparation at Ostend and Dunkirk, where shipping for a large expedition had been collected. It was to be led, as Thurlow's spies reported, by Charles Stuart in person. Six thousand Spanish veterans were to be embarked. The Royalists of the West of England were understood to be in league with the invaders. All arrangements had been made, it was declared, for the West Country to rise in arms on the first news of the landing. At the same time, according to cypher messages from the Hague, the Dutch, who were in no friendly mood to Cromwell, were reported to be getting their fleet ready for sea. To meet the threatened danger, orders were issued to mobilize the ships in reserve at once. So it came about that the *London* was shipping guns and ammunition in the *Hope* in the month of April, 1657. She was to fit for service in the Channel, and take on board six months' supplies of provisions and powder and shot.

The *London* was one of the first of the ships ordered out. On the day that the order to fit her for sea went forth the *London* was at Chatham, lying a bare, empty hull, with only the lower masts in, one of the fleet reserve in the Medway, one of the ships "in Ordinary," lying at the usual moorings for men-of-war of her rate just above Upnor Castle. Three weeks later—during which time the other ships at Chatham were being brought forward for sea—the *London* had her ballast and cable and anchors put on board, topmasts and rigging set up, and yards across—a smart performance for those days, and highly creditable to Commissioner Pett and his right-hand man Captain Taylor, the builder of the *London*. On March 11th Pett reported the *London* to the Navy Office as ready to receive her sea stores and her guns. On March 26th he was able to report the *London* as having the bulk of her sea stores and beer on board. She would, said Pett, sail next day for the *Lower Hope*, the appointed rendezvous for the fleet, where Chatham men-of-war at that time usually completed for sea. It was convenient of access

For the occasion, we will suppose ourselves among a party of visitors to Gravesend, come down from Billingsgate Wharf by one of the everyday "tide-boats," and on sight-seeing bent, to take a look at some of the men-of-war that we have heard are now in the Hope, and with a further idea, indeed, if we can manage it, of getting on board one of them. By good fortune at the outset we have a letter of introduction to Mr. John Morris, Customs officer at Gravesend, the official charged with sending off the stores to the men-of-war in the Thames, and the local supervisor ashore of navy business in general. Mingling on our arrival in the busy riverside crowd of labourers and watermen, navy officers, Navy Board sub-officials, and sailors passing to and fro from the landing-place, where man-of-war boats are ever coming in or going off, we at length find Mr. Morris. He is very busy, of course, but he will do what he can for us and attend to us at his first spare moment. Then he is called elsewhere, and we are left to our own resources for a while. So we fall to talking with one of the ministers of the ships in the Hope, who happens to be standing near, waiting for his ship's boat to come alongside. He is "a godly brother of the Independent way," such as all our navy chaplains have to be in these days: soberly attired in plain dark close-fitting

from the Navy storehouses at Deptford and the State arsenal at the Tower, and a convenient place for filling up ships' complements with men impressed out of merchantmen passing up and down the river. The *London* let go anchor in the Hope, two miles below Gravesend, on March 28th.



doublet and sad-coloured cloak, with narrow cuffs, Geneva bands, close-cropped hair, and black skull-cap. The authorities make a great point of every State's ship in these days carrying a minister, and he generally has allotted to him the next best cabin after the captain himself.

We accost the reverend man with becoming deference, and he is pleased to point out his own ship to us—an unassuming-looking vessel, when one remembers what men-of-war used to be like. Her hull is bare of the gilded mouldings and tracery and red and blue painted scrollery and fretwork vanities, such as, so our divine explains, one used to see in the men-of-war of the fleet of the late Man of Sin. Like all the other State's ships that we see up and down stream, the vessel is, from gunwale to waterline, all over of a dull unrelieved black. The canary-yellow hulls that one can remember in the old Royal Navy are nowadays no more. Gay colouring and gilding are as things of Babylon, worldly gewgaws, not to be sanctioned in the Navy of the Elect. Even the sparkle and glint of the brass cannons in the sun to some of our godly captains are, the minister goes on to say, an offence and a stumbling-block, a pandering to the lust of the eyes, and they paint their great guns from muzzle to breech a dead black. Other captains, indeed, we learn from him, have their brass guns and "bright work" dulled over on Saturdays, that no gleaming surface on the Lord's Day may be counted against them for unrighteousness. So the minister relates, and being a



devout man to look at, we would fain assume that he is not telling us a mere galley yarn that he himself may have heard from some waggish member of his flock afloat.

Looking about us on our own account, we notice these details. What touches of colour the Navy Commissioners allow in a man-of-war are confined to the bows and to the quarters and stern. On the stem, or beak-head, a simply carved "beaste" shows up as the figurehead, a lion rampant, "painted gold-colour and decently garnished with bracketts."

Ornate figureheads, as of old, are in disfavour at the Navy Office—they are "as feathers in fantastic caps," as the Commissioners have laid down. Only in one special case has more than £25 been allowed for the carving of a figurehead. The exception is the *Naseby*, whose original figurehead cost £100.

On the quarters and stern of the *London*, the upright timbers and counter-pieces and the supporting brackets are lightly carved in a quiet style, and picked out with "gold colour in oils," the whole forming a neat setting for the shield of the State's arms, which is inset in the upper portion of the stern, the ship's badge of nationality—a plain shield with two compartments, one bearing a red St. George's Cross on a white field, and the other the yellow Harp of Ireland on plain blue. Otherwise, and between these points, the hull is entirely devoid of ornament.

The entire gilding and painting of the *London* cost £120—between £500 and £600 at the present-day value of money. The bill for it, sent in by Mr. Isaacson, the contractor, is in existence at the British Museum.

Mr. Morris reappears at this point, bringing with him a ship's officer, whom he introduces as Mr. George Dam, the purser of the *London*. Purser Dam, he tells us, is just going off to his ship, and will be pleased, if we like to accompany him, to show us round the *London*. We agree gladly, and congratulate ourselves the more, for the *London* is the biggest and finest man-of-war of all the fleet at this moment in the Hope.

The *London*, as a fact, is one of the biggest men-of-war in all the State's fleet. She measures 1050 tons, and from end to end of the gun-deck over 150 feet, with an extreme breadth amidships of 41 feet.

Now we are alongside, and mount the side with Purser Dam, to pass on board by the entering-port on the middle deck. On the upper deck we find Captain Cuttle, an interesting person to meet in real life. He is temporarily in charge of the *London*, with orders to fit her out and sail her round to the Downs. There, Captain Littlejohn, the officer whom the Lord Protector has designated for the command, will take over the ship, on the *London* becoming flagship. Captain Littlejohn has been in the Mediterranean and with General Blake off the coast of Spain, and has only recently paid off his last ship,

the *Providence*. He is now in London, attending the Admiralty Committee on certain official affairs.

Having found Captain Cuttle, we may make a note of him. He has already done more than one hard day's work for England with Blake and Monk, fighting the Dutchmen; and, if we dip into the future, will find yet another opportunity of doing his duty against the same enemy. It will then be as a captain in King Charles the Second's fleet, to meet his end as a brave British sailor should, in battle, on the quarter-deck of his own ship (aptly named the *Hector*), in the thick of the cannon smoke and ringed round with half a dozen enemies, keeping his colours defiantly flying; in the end to go down with his sinking ship rather than lower the flag of England! All honour to a hero whom our naval histories forget—to Captain John Cuttle, the first captain on board our first *London* man-of-war!

Going round the *London*, these are some of the points that strike the visitor.

The bulwarks and fittings within-board are painted a sober drab, "stone colour" as the Navy Board calls it; brightened up here and there with details picked out in green. The "Round House," or "Great Cabin," the captain's part of the ship, is neatly panelled and wainscoted, "garnished completely," and "painted Walnut Red colour in oil, with gilded mouldings in parts." The lieutenant's cabin is likewise wainscoted and "French-varnished," as is the minister's cabin. The minister, as we know, is generally provided with, or gets some-





CROMWELL'S MAN-OF-WAR THE LONDON  
*From a contemporary print kindly lent by Mr. Wentworth Hayshe*





how, the best cabin on board after the captain of the ship. Some people grumble at the arrangement. The inferior officers have "standing cabins." One each is provided for them below. An oval table and a wooden bedstead and chair compose the furniture that is supplied by the State to all ships, alike for the captain, the lieutenant, and the minister. Outside the captain's cabin, and close at hand, within reach of the captain's voice, in the event of its occupant being suddenly turned out at night for a general call to quarters, is a small cabin for the *London's* master-trumpeter. On the gun-deck below, where the men have their quarters, "a long table with forms and other conveniences" is set fore and aft, for the men to take their meals at. The men sleep in hammocks, in "hanging cabins," over the guns.

The guns, it should be remarked as we pass along, are all of brass. Brass guns are the regulation for all State's men-of-war. Iron guns are only found in armed merchantmen taken up as auxiliaries. The *London's* sixty-four guns are these: on the lower deck, twenty-four pieces—twelve demi-cannon, firing shot weighing some thirty-two pounds each, and twelve culverins, firing eighteen-pound shot; on the middle deck, again twenty-four guns—twelve culverins, firing eighteen-pounder shot, and twelve demi-culverins, nine-pounders. There are six more demi-culverins on the forecastle, and four in the waist. On the quarter-deck of the *London*, and in the captain's cabin, are again six demi-culverins.

We gather also one or two other things by the way. Most of the shot is kept in the "shot-room" in the hold, but a constant supply is also kept ready at hand, placed in the racks near the guns, right round the sides of the decks, where it can be quickly got at. The *London's* supply for service is 1900 round shot and 740 double-headed shot. In the magazines are stowed 203 barrels of powder. For close-quarter fighting, should the *London* board an enemy, or be boarded, there are distributed in racks near the gangways and on the main deck 120 muskets, 12 blunderbusses, 80 pikes, and 40 hatchets. The crew of the *London*, finally, numbers 360 officers, men, and boys, all told.

Such are some of the details that would have struck a stranger visiting our first *London* in April, 1657. The ship put to sea a few days later to join the fleet assembling off Dover for Cromwell's new campaign across the Channel.

\* \* \* \* \*

These are the chief points in the story of the *London's* after-career of eight short years. Her guns went off for the first time in salute to Blake's flagship, the *St. George*, as with Blake's body on board and her ensign at half-mast the *St. George* trailed slowly into the Downs one August afternoon a few weeks after the *London* had taken up duty. Then she escorted the first brigade of Ironsides over to Dunkirk for Cromwell's continental campaign, "six thousand well appointed men in new coats of

red." From the masthead of the *London* they watched the Ironsides charge at the Battle of the Dunes, and the captain of the *London* was one of the group of officers who witnessed the final handing over of the keys of Dunkirk to Cromwell's general, Lord Lockhart. In the Downs again, the *London* fired minute guns on Cromwell's funeral day, and her officers in the captain's cabin signed their "Address of Loyalty" to Richard Cromwell, expressing "our constant fidelity to you as rightful and undoubted Protector."

Pepys tells us how the *London*, and the fleet with her, changed their allegiance at the Restoration, and also how the *London* fired her first royal salute.

The *London*, with Vice-Admiral Lawson's flag at the fore, was lying in the Thames below Tilbury, where the fleet for the summer service of 1660 was assembling as usual, when, on the 3rd of May, the Navy declared openly for King Charles. A copy of King Charles's declaration, which was already in the hands of General Monk and the House of Commons, was on that day sent down to Admiral Edward Montagu, who was in chief command at sea. Montagu summoned Vice-Admiral Lawson and his captains to a council of war on board the flagship *Naseby* forthwith. The declaration was accepted unanimously; a resolution of devotion to King Charles was passed. Then the declaration

and resolution were read to the assembled crew from the quarter-deck. "The seamen," says Pepys, who was present as the Admiral's secretary, "did all of them cry out 'God bless King Charles !' with the greatest joy imaginable."

During the afternoon, Pepys, as proud as a peacock, was rowed round the fleet and read the declaration and the resolution of the Council of War on board each ship. It was "a very brave sight," he tells us, "to visit all the ships, and to be received with the respect and honour that I was on board them all ; and much more to see the great joy that I brought to all men."

The *Naseby* and the *London* that evening led off the Navy's royal salute. It was taken up from them by the rest of the ships, one by one, and fired with shotted guns, letting off the guns as they were, all ready loaded, a way they had in the Navy of those days. The shooting began just as Pepys was finishing up with the *London*. "In the evening as I was going on board the Vice-Admiral, the General began to fire his guns, which he did all that he had in the ship, and so did all the rest of the Commanders, which was very gallant, and to hear the bullets go hissing over our heads as we were in the boat."

Wrote Pepys to his friend Doling next day, enclosing a copy of the vote : "He that can fancy a fleet (like ours) in her pride, with pendants loose, guns roaring, caps flying, and the loud 'Vive le Roy's' echoed from one ship's company to another,



he, and he only, can apprehend the joy the inclosed vote was received with ! ”

Pepys also describes how, on their starting to meet the King, by a special order from the Admiralty, the carvings and decorations on board all the ships were altered forthwith, the State's arms being taken down and the King's painted and set up instead. The Commonwealth Navy flags, hitherto flown at the *London's* masthead, were at the same time ordered to be hauled down at once, and be replaced by “such standards, flags, and jacks as were in use before 1648.”

The *Naseby*, *London*, and *Swiftsure*, as the senior officers' ships, were supplied with silken ensigns, together with “waist-cloths” and “top-armours”—of scarlet cloth in the case of the *Naseby*; of scarlet kersey for the *London* and the *Swiftsure*. This was specially in honour of the royal guests that each ship was designated to bring across. They were at work on the alterations while making the passage. So Pepys, who was on board the *Naseby*, relates, under date the 13th of May: “To the quarter-deck, at which the taylors and painters were at work, cutting out some pieces of yellow cloth in the fashion of a crown and C.R., and put it upon a fine sheet and that into the flag instead of the State's arms, which after dinner was finished and set up.”

The *London* brought over as her special passenger of state the personage of next importance after Charles himself, the King's brother, James, Duke of York (afterwards James the Second), who flew at the



*London's* masthead the flag of the Lord High Admiral of England, to which post he had been appointed on the arrival of the fleet.<sup>1</sup>

The *London's* third commission was her last. In March of the year 1665, at the outset of the second Dutch War, as the fleet was preparing for sea, an appalling disaster befell the *London*. While on her way up the Thames, between the Nore and the Hope, there to hoist the flag of the Vice-Admiral of the Red, Sir John Lawson, the *London* suddenly blew up. All on board, over three hundred people, perished. Only twenty-four men, and one woman, were picked up, clinging to fragments of wreckage. How the disaster came about was never known.

<sup>1</sup> In honour of the occasion, the King promised the officers and crews of each of the ships of his escort a month's pay—£750 it came to in the case of the *London*. Pepys made out the account for all the thirty ships interested, estimating the total sum required at £6538. He pathetically adds in his *Diary*: "I wish we had the money!"

#### IV

### HOW THE CITY BUILT THE *LOYALL LONDON*

**P**EPYS, going down to the Navy Office on Tower Hill on the 8th of March, found the City shocked and full of grief. We have seen why. The second biggest man-of-war of the Royal Navy, the magnificent *London* of seventy guns, had been blown up off the mouth of the Thames with nearly all on board. That was the dreadful news that in the second week of March, 1665, startled and horrified all England. "I went to the 'Change," says Pepys, "where the news was taken much to heart."

He heard all that was known about it on reaching the Navy Office.

"8th. This morning is brought me to the office the sad news of the *London*, in which Sir J. Lawson's men were all bringing her from Chatham to the Hope, and thence he was to go to sea in her, but a little on this side the buoy of the Nower she suddenly blew up. About 24 men and a woman that were in the round-house and coach saved, the rest, being about 300, drowned; the ship breaking all in pieces with

80 pieces of brass ordnance. She lies sunk, with her round-house above water. Sir J. Lawson hath a great loss in this of so many good chosen men, and many relations among them."

Well might so appalling a catastrophe, at the outset of a war, and happening too at their very doors, as it were, be taken "very much to heart" in London. The second Dutch War had just broken out. The enemy were at sea; the first shots had been fired. The loss of so fine a man-of-war came as a staggering blow. Every one knew Sir John Lawson, a rough-and-ready hard-fighting admiral, one of the ablest veterans of the time.<sup>1</sup> And it was the *London*, of all ships, that had been lost. That, the name of the ship, seemed to appeal to everybody. "Let us replace her ourselves; let us build

<sup>1</sup> Vice-Admiral John Lawson was by common consent the ablest officer in the Navy. "Lawson," says Clarendon, "was a perfect tarpaulin, a very extraordinary person. He understood his profession incomparably well." A Yorkshireman, born at Scarborough, and claiming family connection with an old Northumbrian family, the Lawsons of Longhirst, he had served for seventeen years as captain and admiral in the Navy of the Commonwealth. Bred to the sea from his boyhood, he had fought with Blake and Monk as a flag-officer in the first Dutch War in four of their six battles; in the forefront ever as a hard fighter, and with brilliant distinction as a tactician under fire. The seamen of the fleet were attached to him with a strong personal regard, and trusted him above all the other officers of the day. He was a man of extreme views in religious matters, and an avowed Republican and opponent of Cromwell during the Protectorate, holding on principle that a Commonwealth form of government was the best for the country. So Lawson remained, until in the end, seeing under existing Parliamentary methods nothing before England but anarchy, he changed his ideas, as a matter of patriotism, and agreed, as the only thing to save the country, to co-operate with Monk and Montagu in bringing in the King. "His assent carried with it that of the seamen of the fleet."

the King a new *London*!" said the City in effect, on the spur of the moment and with one voice.

Before twenty-four hours the idea was taking shape. "There is a rumour in the City," says an existing letter dated the 9th of March, "that the Aldermen and several companies will build the King a ship to be called the *London*."

Pepys was in the City again next day:—

"10th. Up and to the Office all the morning. At noon to the 'Change, where very hot, people's proposal of the City giving the King another Ship for the *London*, that is lately blown up; which would be very handsome, and if well managed might be done; but I fear if it be put into ill hands, or that the courtiers do solicit it, it will never be done."

Lord Mayor Lawrence and the aldermen mean-

There is a portrait of Admiral Lawson in the Painted Hall at Greenwich Hospital. Besides that, we have his correspondence with the Admiralty, which shows him as a man of his time in ways and phrase. Imagine a modern admiral announcing his readiness to sail in these terms: "All that look towards Zion should hold Christian Communion; we have all the guns aboard." If not so tersely worded as Cromwell's historic "Put your trust in God and keep your powder dry," Lawson meant the same thing. Sir John Lawson fell mortally wounded on board the *Royal Oak* in the ensuing battle in June 1665. His death is commemorated in Waller's set of contemporary verses entitled *Poems on State Affairs*. After describing the fate of the Dutch admiral, he thus proceeds:—

"Destiny allow'd

Him his Revenge; to make his death more proud,  
A fatal Bullet from his side did range,  
And batter'd Lawson: oh! too dear Exchange!  
He led our Fleet that Day too short a space,  
But lost his knee; since, dy'd in Glory's Race:  
Lawson! whose Valour beyond fate did go,  
And still fights Opdam in the Lake below."



while were drawing up a letter to the King making the offer on behalf of the City. They would engage, they said, not only to build another ship of the same size as the blown-up *London*, but, in addition, until the new man-of-war was ready, would undertake to "support three ships in the fleet at their own charges." Loyalty could hardly go further. King Charles, for his part, declared himself as "delighted." He would, replied His Majesty, accept so loyal an offer "gladly." Further, he would "retain the same in memory for the advantage of this royal chamber upon all occasions." Still more to show his appreciation, King Charles announced that the name of the new ship "Shall be the *Loyall London*."

The Lord Mayor on the 17th of March reported to the Court of Common Council what had taken place. He had waited on His Majesty, he said, "for his Royal leave to promote a free and voluntary contribution within the City for the speedy building of another frigott to supply that losse," and the King had returned "a very gracious and favorable acceptance," and had thanked them, relying on "the most loyall and signall affection of the City towards his Majesty." A committee was forthwith appointed "to manage the affair touching the intended ship to be built for his Majesty's Service." It comprised the Lord Mayor himself and the sheriffs and twenty-four aldermen and deputies and commoners, with a sub-committee of certain of the leading citizens.



Precepts were issued the very next morning to the Livery Companies, enjoining on them "to excite and persuade their members in every possible way to subscribe to the undertaking." Elaborate arrangements were proposed by the committee "to ensure good building and constant surveys." A special surveyor, the Clerk of the Works at the Guildhall, was appointed by the Lord Mayor "to report from time to time to the Committee on the progress of the ship." Within a fortnight the names of the three master-builders, with their plans and prices, were submitted to the King for His Majesty's choice: Captain Taylor, Mr. Henry Johnson, Mr. Castle. Their estimates for the ship ranged from £18,000 odd to £20,000. The figures should be multiplied by five to get the present-day value of the tenders. The King took four days to decide, and then finally fixed on Captain Taylor, who, on being approached, agreed to reduce his estimate by £1000. Sir William Ryder and Sir William Batten were appointed joint surveyors on behalf of the Navy Board.

Captain Taylor, it should be said, had been the builder of Cromwell's *London*.

On the 28th of April the Guildhall Committee signed Taylor's contract and he set to work at once. He was to be paid £500 a month, and it was estimated that the total cost would work out at between £17,000 and £18,000—between £80,000 and £90,000 at the present day. According to Pepys, Captain Taylor's idea was to adopt his earlier design to

some extent, and build what we should term nowadays an "improved *London*." As to certain measurements, Pepys complains that he wanted to "alter his mould in his new *London*, that he makes it differ in hopes of mending the old *London* built by him: for," proceeds Pepys, "he finds that God hath put him into the right, and so will keep in it while he is in. And says the King, 'I am sure it must be God put him in, for no art of his owne ever could have done it': for it seems he cannot give a good account of what he do as an artiste."

Next it was the business of the citizens to act their part and find the money. That, as the situation shaped itself, was another matter. The getting together of the promised subscriptions proved a more difficult matter than had been anticipated.

The list was formally opened at the Guildhall on the 29th of April. By the end of June only £750 had been received. This, by dint of private pressure—Captain Taylor had already begun to clamour for his overdue second instalment—was raised by the middle of August to £2149. 6s. Then the subscriptions practically stopped entirely—for six months.

Poor Captain Taylor then began to haunt the Guildhall with complaints that the monthly instalments under his contract were getting so far in arrear that he might ere long not be able to answer for the consequences. He did not want to knock off work on the *Loyall London*, he said, but somebody must pay his men.

As the only thing to be done in the circumstances,

the Lord Mayor (Sir Thomas Bludworth) issued a public letter to the citizens on the 24th of January, 1666. Many who had promised large sums, said the Lord Mayor, had not paid a penny. Others, who could well afford to help, had not come forward at all. It would be, the Lord Mayor went on, "dishonourable to the City if the building of the ship be not expeditiously carried out." The Common Council, he added, would have to be called to consider the matter, and further precepts would be issued for the raising of the money.

The appeal was not received with much enthusiasm as it would appear, and the almost despairing Captain Taylor kept calling to see the Lord Mayor nearly every day.

There were reasons, no doubt, that went far to account for the cooling down of the ardour of the citizens. One was that certain very unpleasant disclosures had been made in Parliament in regard to the criminal waste and official malversations of Navy funds. Another was that the Plague had brought business in general to a standstill for the time being, and money was very scarce. The war with Holland, in addition, weakly and carelessly conducted, had resulted in the practical stoppage of the whole of the oversea trade of London, while its coasting trade had been rendered all but impossible owing to the Dutch privateers, which our frigates could not catch, swarming all over the North Sea and Channel.

Lord Mayor Bludworth's appeal, however, only brought in an additional £695. 8s. in six weeks.

On the 10th of March, 1666, the grand total stood just at £2844. 15s. Again a spasmodic effort was made to compel some of the subscribers to keep their promises. That resulted in raising the fund to £3731. 10s. by the end of March. During April and May between £500 and £600 more came in, making in all £4253. 13s. 2d. After that the first list was declared closed.

To quiet Captain Taylor an extra £500 was now borrowed from the Lieutenancy, and arrangements were announced for the opening of a fresh list, although the Committee of the Common Council feared there was "an utter unlikelihood of raising more that way." Over and above the sum already received £10,000 was required, which the Common Council declared would have to be raised compulsorily from the livery companies, each company being ordered to pay a stated contribution proportionately assessed by the City Treasurer. It was "a matter of so much importunity to His Majesty, the whole Kingdom's service, and the Honour of the City, the Ship being required to serve in this Summer's Expedition."

These were the subscribers to the first list and what they each gave :—

|                                     | £   | s. | d. |
|-------------------------------------|-----|----|----|
| Cordwainers . . . . .               | 20  | 0  | 0  |
| Tylers . . . . .                    | 28  | 9  | 0  |
| Drapers . . . . .                   | 300 | 0  | 0  |
| Wax Chandlers . . . . .             | 13  | 12 | 0  |
| Girdlers . . . . .                  | 50  | 0  | 0  |
| Ironmongers (in three instalments). | 148 | 0  | 0  |



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|   | £   | s. | d. |
|---|-----|----|----|
| Salters (in two instalments) . . . . .                  | 117 | 11 | 0  |
| Foreign Merchants in the Ward of Billingsgate . . . . . | 24  | 0  | 0  |
| Foreign Merchants in Tower Ward . . . . .               | 30  | 0  | 0  |
| Foreign Merchants in Candlewick Ward . . . . .          | 16  | 10 | 0  |
| Alderman Shelbury . . . . .                             | 20  | 0  | 0  |
| Merchants un-free in the Ward of Lime Street . . . . .  | 27  | 0  | 0  |
| Michael Godfrey . . . . .                               | 5   | 0  | 0  |
| Scriveners . . . . .                                    | 12  | 11 | 0  |
| Innholders . . . . .                                    | 30  | 0  | 0  |
| Skinners . . . . .                                      | 90  | 0  | 0  |
| Cordwainers . . . . .                                   | 1   | 12 | 0  |
| Sir Edward Alston, Kt. . . . .                          | 5   | 0  | 0  |
| Sadlers . . . . .                                       | 20  | 0  | 0  |
| Joiners . . . . .                                       | 24  | 2  | 0  |
| Alderman Sir John Lawrence, Kt. . . . .                 | 100 | 0  | 0  |
| Fishmongers . . . . .                                   | 300 | 0  | 0  |
| Bowyers . . . . .                                       | 5   | 12 | 6  |
| Coopers . . . . .                                       | 63  | 0  | 0  |
| Clothworkers . . . . .                                  | 100 | 0  | 0  |
| Turners . . . . .                                       | 23  | 18 | 4  |
| Merchant Taylors (in three instalments) . . . . .       | 110 | 10 | 0  |
| Mercers . . . . .                                       | 29  | 10 | 0  |
| Goldsmiths . . . . .                                    | 24  | 0  | 0  |
| Grocers . . . . .                                       | 40  | 0  | 0  |
| Barber-Surgeons . . . . .                               | 143 | 12 | 6  |
| Alderman Alex. Holt . . . . .                           | 15  | 0  | 0  |
| Foreign Merchants in Cordwainer Ward . . . . .          | 35  | 10 | 0  |
| Mr. Xtopher Willoughby, Merchant . . . . .              | 7   | 0  | 0  |
| Alderman Sir John Robinson, Kt. and Bart. . . . .       | 100 | 0  | 0  |

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£4253 13 2

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Captain Taylor for his part, meanwhile, in spite of his financial troubles, had not slackened his work on the *Loyall London*. The hull of the ship had been already completed, and he was writing to the Admiralty about the day of the launch.

The second subscription list was opened on the 22nd of May, 1666, and kept open until the 7th of March, 1667. It produced £4679. 13s., which was thus made up :—

|   | £   | s. | d. |
|---|-----|----|----|
| Fruiterers . . . . .                          | 10  | 0  | 0  |
| Cutlers (in two instalments) . . . . .        | 34  | 0  | 0  |
| Curriers (in two instalments) . . . . .       | 15  | 0  | 0  |
| Goldsmiths (in two instalments) . . . . .     | 700 | 0  | 0  |
| Bowyers . . . . .                             | 5   | 0  | 0  |
| Drapers (in two instalments) . . . . .        | 750 | 0  | 0  |
| Mercers (2nd subscription) . . . . .          | 500 | 0  | 0  |
| Pewterers . . . . .                           | 70  | 0  | 0  |
| Founders . . . . .                            | 10  | 0  | 0  |
| Haberdashers . . . . .                        | 185 | 0  | 0  |
| Carpenters . . . . .                          | 25  | 0  | 0  |
| Fishmongers . . . . .                         | 320 | 0  | 0  |
| Coopers . . . . .                             | 70  | 0  | 0  |
| Brewers . . . . .                             | 49  | 5  | 0  |
| Skinners . . . . .                            | 420 | 0  | 0  |
| Ironmongers . . . . .                         | 192 | 0  | 0  |
| Sadlers . . . . .                             | 120 | 0  | 0  |
| Merchant Taylors (4th subscription) . . . . . | 430 | 0  | 0  |
| Tallow Chandlers . . . . .                    | 80  | 0  | 0  |
| Painter Stainers . . . . .                    | 15  | 0  | 0  |
| Weavers . . . . .                             | 35  | 0  | 0  |
| Clothmakers (in three instalments) . . . . .  | 300 | 0  | 0  |
| Scriveners . . . . .                          | 80  | 0  | 0  |
| Glaziers . . . . .                            | 8   | 0  | 0  |

# THE CITY BUILDS THE *LOYALL LONDON* 63

|                       | £     | s. | d. |
|-----------------------|-------|----|----|
| Armourers . . . . .   | 25    | 0  | 0  |
| Innholders . . . . .  | 60    | 0  | 0  |
| Cordwainers . . . . . | 58    | 8  | 0  |
| Turners . . . . .     | 17    | 0  | 0  |
| Bakers . . . . .      | 75    | 0  | 0  |
| Poulterers . . . . .  | 15    | 0  | 0  |
| Cooks . . . . .       | 5     | 0  | 0  |
|                       | <hr/> |    |    |
|                       | £4679 | 13 | 0  |
|                       | <hr/> |    |    |

This is the final summary of accounts as recorded in the Guildhall manuscript "Statement":—

|  | £      | s. | d. |
|--|--------|----|----|
| Received of the Companies . . . . .  | 8933   | 6  | 2  |
| Paid out of "ye Shedde Cashe" <sup>1</sup> . . . . .   | 3300   | 0  | 0  |
| „ „ „ „ye Chamber's Cashe" . . . . .   | 4039   | 3  | 10 |
|  | <hr/>  |    |    |
|  | 16,272 | 10 | 0  |
| Borrowed of the Lieutenancy . . . . .  | 500    | 0  | 0  |
| Received out of the City Cashes to pay<br>Captain Taylor's and Batten's mort-<br>gages . . . . . | 1582   | 10 | 0  |
|  | <hr/>  |    |    |
|  | 18,355 | 0  | 0  |
|  | <hr/>  |    |    |

Of the total sum, £13,570 was paid over in hard cash to Captain Taylor ("Taylor had of this £13,570," in the words of the manuscript), and

<sup>1</sup> With regard to this the Librarian at the Guildhall, Mr. Edward M. Borrajo, has kindly made inquiries and writes as follows:—

"I have enquired of the Records Clerk and also of the Chamberlain, but neither knows anything of the 'Shedd Cash.' I can only suggest that it referred to a fund kept at the shipbuilding yard for the payment, possibly, of labour as distinct from material: the Chamberlain paying out certain sums to be kept at the shed there for that purpose."

£4712. 10s. went to Captain Batten, one of the Admiralty surveyors. The balance was thus expended: £70 to the widow of a shipwright who met his death while the ship was building, and £2. 10s. "for the drawing up of Captain Taylor's contract." Taylor, however, was not finally paid off until 1671, five years later. The *Loyall London's* accounts were finally cleared off and passed on the 23rd of October, 1675, eight years and three months after the ship herself had ceased to exist, in circumstances to be described later.

The King's birthday, the 29th of May, had been spoken of as a "good day" to launch the *London* on. But the ship was not quite ready, as Captain Taylor reported. The painters were sent on board during the following week.

While they were busily engaged coating the ship's bulwarks and sides within with the dull red colouring that had of late come into use in the Navy, for a grim matter-of-fact purpose—to render the blood splashes as inconspicuous as possible in battle—all London was out of doors, listening in a state of anxious suspense to the dull reverberating thunder of heavy cannonading from the eastward, off the mouth of the Thames or thereabouts. "Walking through the Park," says Pepys, "we saw hundreds of people listening at the Gravell pits, and to and again in the Park, to hear the guns."

It was well that they did not know what was happening—that the English fleet had separated; that Prince Rupert with a third of the whole fleet, and

those the pick of the ships, had gone off on a false alarm down Channel; that Albemarle with only fifty ships was in fight, facing De Ruyter and the entire Dutch fleet of nearly ninety.

Regardless of the odds, Albemarle, with the old war-horse spirit of George Monk when he faced Tromp on Camperdown Day thirteen years before, had rashly hurled himself against a vastly superior enemy, and had been roughly flung back.

'Twas on a Friday, the First of June,  
We sighted the Dutch in the afternoon,  
Half seas over at anchor they lay,  
Betwixt the Foreland and Calais Bay :  
And we swore not to shirk,  
As we set to work,  
Till we'd sent them flying past strong Dunkirk !

The fighting lasted for four days—"The Four Days' Bloody Blunder" was what the men at the guns called the battle, "The Four Days' Fight" was the politer name for it on the part of the courtiers of Whitehall—and although the tardy arrival, on the evening of the third day, of Rupert at the head of twenty ships, recalled in haste as the first day's fighting began, equalized matters to some extent, the penalty of rashness had to be paid.

They heard the guns at Whitehall, and the order went forth that, whether the carpenters and painters had finished or not, the *Loyall London* must be launched within a week, by the 8th of June at latest.

The launch actually took place two days after the last date named.

This martial present, piously designed,  
The loyal City gave its best loved King



—as Dryden speaks of the *Loyall London* man-of-war—was launched on the 10th of June, 1666. The send-off took place with royal honours.

John Evelyn was one of those present, and records the event in his *Diary*: “I saw the *London* frigate launched, a most stately ship, built by the City to supply that which was burnt by accident some time since, the King, Lord Mayor, and Sheriffs being there, with a great banquet.” Other accounts speak of there being some hitch at the launch. “The *Loyall London*,” records the *London Gazette*, “after two or three trials was very happily put on float at the Evening Tide, the West Winds having till then kept back the waters that they had not enough for their purpose.” “The King there,” says Pepys, “and very angry with Taylor for using rotten gear and refusing the men a little small beer.”

What was said at the banquet one would rather like to know. In spite of the festivities in celebration of so interesting an occasion, there was a very disturbing spectre at the feast. Pepys, who was in the City on the previous day, had remarked “ther countenances much changed,” while at Court he notes that certain high personages were “much damped,” everybody being “melancholy” and “talking sadly.” England had indeed good reason for depression.

Three days before the launch of the *Loyall London*, the Duke of Albemarle and Prince Rupert with their shattered fleet had slowly trailed into the Thames and cast anchor at the Nore. For the week before that all London had been in an uproar of wild



delight, elated and cheering crowds in the streets letting off guns and lighting bonfires, making merry over news, received by way of Harwich, that the battle in the North Sea had ended in a tremendous victory. "The Court," says Pepys, "was in a hubbub, being rejoiced over head and ears at this good news."

That was the first news. Three days before the launch of the *Loyall London* official news arrived that the fleet had been badly beaten. The fleet itself arrived, with, as Pepys puts it, "contrary news, which astonishes me." "We are beaten," he dolefully adds; "lost many good ships and good commanders, and have not taken one ship of the enemy's, and so can only report ourselves a victory, nor is it certain that we were left masters of the field." One first-rate, the *Prince*, and the *Essex*, a frigate, had been surrendered to the enemy; the *Swiftsure*, the *Loyall George*, and the *Seven Oaks* were officially reported "missing"—which, as everybody understood, meant the same thing. Especially bitter was the general resentment at the news of these surrenders. It was never so before, said people, that "English ships should be basely and cowardly yielded up to our Enemies." "Our ancient Policie"—to quote from a letter written by a country squire to a relative in the fleet—"was that all Commanders and souldiers whatsoever, of or in any of the King's ships, were to perish in and with them rather than let them come into the Enemies' hands, all which was worthily performed by our forefathers."

My Lord Mayor and his royal guest and the rest of the banqueters had much on their minds that day in the midst of all the revelry at the sending off of the *Loyall London*.

The City records which should have made mention of the launch are missing. "*In horrendis ignibus perierunt*," records a slip of paper inserted in the Minute Book of the Court of Aldermen; i.e. burned in the Great Fire. The Journal of the Court of Common Council simply notes for the day of the launch: "Att Deptford"; the rest of the page is provokingly left a blank. The State Papers mention only one fact: that a sergeant-trumpeter, eight trumpeters, and a kettledrummer were hired at a fee of £27, "for sounding on the occasion," and that for months afterwards the poor men were trying in vain to get their money, the Admiralty referring them to the City, and the City disclaiming liability and referring them back to the Admiralty.

So it comes about that we have no direct record of what took place on the occasion of the launch of the *Loyall London*. All the same, though, we can picture for ourselves after a fashion the details of the ceremony, from what we know of the practice of those times.

It was the rule at that day to name a man-of-war *after* she had been launched, not, as now, before, while the ship is still on the stocks, on dry land or in dock. The ship was first got afloat, and then she formally received her name. The naming ceremony, the "christening," as it was then officially

styled, was a ceremony by itself, a very stately affair, conducted with certain time-honoured observances which had been kept up practically ever since the time of Henry the Eighth. Even under the Commonwealth, at least in the cases of the more important ships, the old ceremonial was kept up in its main features.

On the appointed day a personage of note specially appointed by the Sovereign to name the ship attended in state, and escorted by a guard of honour, and preceded by kettledrummers and trumpeters, in company with a procession of officers and officials, all in gala-day attire, passed on board the ship, which, after being sent afloat, had been brought back alongside the dockyard for the occasion, and lay decorated with the Royal Standard and banners and other flags, and festoons and wreaths of leaves and flowers. When the King himself was present, a gaily adorned "gallery" immediately overlooking the scene was provided, where His Majesty and his courtiers and the guests of honour invited for the day sat to witness the proceedings. After going round the upper decks, the officer of state deputed by the King to name the ship finally took his seat on the poop, where the master-builder presented him with a silver-gilt "standing-cup" of wine. Taking this, the personage of the hour first drank a health to the King, on which all cheered, and the trumpets and drums struck up. Then he drank again and formally announced the name of the ship in a loud voice on behalf of



His Majesty, wishing the new "shipp royall" all success, and ceremoniously pouring the rest of the wine out on the deck as he did so, part to the north and part to the east, part to the south and part to the west. Then there was more cheering, and the music again sounded. The silver cup was now formally handed to the master-builder as his memento of the occasion. Another procession round the decks below and out of the ship concluded the formalities, after which a banquet in the house of the master-builder wound up the day in festive style. That was undoubtedly the practice in Stuart times, and was what took place at Deptford on that June day of 1666 when the *Loyall London* received her name.

Dryden, who may well have been in the courtier throng at the launch of the *Loyall London*, before flying into Wiltshire to escape the Plague, as he did a few weeks later, speaks of the appearance of the ship in his poetical chronicle of the events of 1666, *Annus Mirabilis*, in these terms:—

The goodly *London* in her gallant trim,  
 The Phoenix-daughter of the vanished old,  
 Like a rich bride does to the ocean swim,  
 And on her shadow rides in floating gold.

With roomy decks, her guns of mighty strength,  
 Whose lowlaid mouths each mounting billow laves;  
 Deep in her draught and warlike in her length,  
 She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves!

A very different-looking craft, indeed, from the black-sided Commonwealth *London* was the *Loyall London*, a picture of which is now at the Hague. The Restoration had brought back the old style

of bright colouring and gilt and carved-work ornamentation for all the King's ships of war. The *Loyall London* must have been a strikingly handsome object when she took the water, her sides of a bright canary-yellow over all—the colour of the resin and oil varnish composition, “dubbed” over the oak planking. In staring contrast with the yellow, and setting it off vividly, between each tier of ports and below to the waterline, two double bands, or “strakes,” of black, the tarred “wales,” extended the length of the ship, from stem to stern. One can see what Dryden meant by calling the *Loyall London* “a sea-wasp flying on the waves.” At the waterline, underneath the lower of the two longitudinal black strakes, the ship's bottom showed all white, like a fish's belly, the colour of the tallow and brimstone mixture that coated the vessel under water.

Along the bulwarks and upper works of the hull outside, the bright blue painted “topsides” would add to the general brilliancy of the effect, the blue surface itself being decorated with arabesque work, and with gilded imitation wreaths moulded round the upper-deck ports.

A big carved lion rampant—gilded all over, with open jaws and wearing a crown—the regulation badge for all men-of-war of the King's Navy—decorated the bows, together with the shield of the City arms painted in heraldic colours, the whole being supported by elaborately carved and gilded head-rails. At the stern was a carved representation of the Royal Arms of England painted in heraldic



colours, together with King Charles's royal cypher in gilded letters; the framework of the stern making a still more glittering show with a mass of gilded brackets and mouldings, and more carved wreaths round the framework of the latticed cabin windows—the stern and quarter-gallery lights to the “great cabin” and the lavishly decorated round-house, the quarters provided for the “gentleman-captain” of the period and his retinue. One would like to have seen the bill that was sent in to the Lord Mayor for the decoration of the *Loyall London*—how much went for what the Jacks of a later day called “gilt and gingerbread!”

Within-board on the upper deck, a visitor would have seen everything painted a dull red, the bulwarks, railings, hatchways, gratings, gangways, ladders, the capstan, belfry, the gun carriages: all so coloured, as has been said, for a special purpose—to render as inconspicuous as might be unpleasant stains and splashes in the hour of battle. The inner faces of the port lids throughout the ship are also painted red, producing externally a smart effect on the ports being opened and the lids triced back. Within the ship below, where there was, of course, less light and little occasion for display, the ordinary resin and oil “dubbing” served for the sides, bulkheads, and fittings, down to the lower deck. Below the waterline level the ship's sides within were tarred over, to serve in keeping the vessel watertight. Something like that was the *Loyall London* to look at.

# V

## THE *LOYALL LONDON* GOES TO SEA

THE City had done its part. It had built the *London* out of its own pocket—at least it had undertaken to find the money for the ship—and had sent her afloat. The rest was for the King and the Admiralty to do: to arm the new ship for war and to man her. With the enemy's frigates cruising within sight of the Nore, these were matters of extreme urgency that month of June, 1666.

They were also matters of extreme difficulty, as things turned out. First, with regard to the *London's* guns. They had been cast by contract at a private foundry and had been delivered in advance, just before the launch, but the entire battery of twenty-four pounders failed on being tested at the proof butts in Moorfields. Says Pepys in his diary for the 28th of June: "In the morning comes Mr. Chichly (Commissioner of the Ordnance) to Sir W. Coventry to tell him the ill-success of the guns made for the *Loyall London*, which is that in the trial every one of the great guns, the whole cannon of seven (as I take it) broke in

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pieces.”<sup>1</sup> To make good the deficiency guns from various land fortifications had to be hurriedly dismounted and sent on board.

Another very serious thing was in regard to the manning of the *Loyall London*. Just at that moment the Admiralty were almost at their wits' end for men.

Three days before the *London* was sent afloat, as has been said, the Duke of Albemarle and Prince Rupert arrived in the Thames with their battered squadrons, after the severe hammering of the Four Days' Fight. They had had very serious losses in killed and wounded; and to make the case worse wholesale desertions followed on the arrival of the ships in port to refit and repair damages, preparatory to putting to sea in accordance with the King's order to give battle again at the earliest moment.

How to get in recruits within the given time was the difficulty that faced the Admiralty. There was little enthusiasm for the naval service among the seafaring population; quite the reverse, in fact. The King's service was looked on among the people at large, among those in particular who were counted on to supply the men to work the ships and fight the guns, as hateful, as a servitude to be shunned and got away from by any means. That was at the root of the trouble. At the outset of that campaign extreme difficulty had been experienced in manning the fleet; now, once in port again, every opportunity was seized on by the men—and only too successfully

<sup>1</sup> “Cannon of seven” were the heaviest ordnance borne afloat: forty-two pounders; seven inches in calibre.

—to make off on shore and vanish into hiding. Nearly a third of the ships' companies disappeared.

So it came about that the task of finding men to form the *Loyall London's* crew at that particular moment proved one of tremendous difficulty.

This was how the situation stood.

On the 24th of June Albemarle and Rupert wrote from the Nore, where the fleet was reassembling, to report to the Privy Council that they were "in want of three thousand men to supply those taken prisoners, slain, wounded, or run away in harbour." Eighteen vessels had been sent to repair at the dockyard at Harwich. Immediately on their arrival no fewer than eight hundred men deserted, "going inland and into Norfolk for Lynn and Wells." The *Rupert* man-of-war, after repairing at Ipswich, could not leave port "for lack of men to handle the sails." At Sheerness, "the entire crew of the *Lion*, except twenty-five men, disappeared in a body in one night."

To cope with the situation, the Admiralty redoubled their previous efforts. To recapture runaways and fill up muster sheets, press warrants were issued wholesale, and "beating orders," to recruit men by beat of drum, were sent round broadcast all over England.

The instructions were honestly complied with as a rule, but in certain parts of the country the local authorities themselves caused difficulties. In some places, we are told, the deputy-lieutenants proved "remiss and unwilling to move." Complaints reached the Admiralty from other places that "there



are many seamen, but the magistrates themselves abscond them."

Elsewhere, on the other hand, superabundant energy was shown. At Southwold, for one place, the King's orders were carried out without respect of persons—"the authorities searched from house to house for men." In London, says Pepys, the pressgang laid hold of "people of very good fashion which is a shame to think of." De Repas, in a letter to Sir Robert Harley, relates a story of a clergyman who remonstrated in the street with a pressgang for carrying off the father of a family. He was roughly answered and asked who was he to interfere? "'A Minister of God!' saith he. 'Nay, then you must come with us; you are so much the fitter; you shall pray while the others fight!' So they carried him away." In some cases, it would seem, the pressgang officers were a little too zealous. The victualling and ordnance craft, on their way down the Thames from the Tower to the Nore with stores for the fleet, were boarded, their crews carried off bodily, and the vessels left stranded. "Most of the postboys on the Kentish road are pressed," protested Sir Philip Froude to Sir Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State, "so that unless some course be taken expresses cannot come nor go." "There are few hackney coaches to be seen," writes De Repas, "as the coachmen have been, or are afraid to be pressed."

Outside London, we are told, the men most wanted kept as a rule out of the way. When the press-



gang was reported at hand, "the seamen and the labouring men," says a letter, "go into the country and hide themselves in the woods and remote places, great numbers together."

The quality of the new levies, too, left a great deal to be desired. Of those that the pressgang did bring in, very many had never seen a ship before, and others were physically useless. The *Royal Charles*, said a report to the Admiralty, had in one batch of pressed men, "a dancing master and two men who are or feign themselves mad, and make very good sport to a bagpipe." Out of one haul of fifty-four pressed men, fifteen, on their arrival at the Nore, flatly refused to serve, "being Dutch, Danes, or Quakers." Others, it was complained, were "pitiful fellows," with "scarce rags to cover them, fall sick in three or four days: some come sick, not without suspicion of plague."

Under the stress of necessity as a last resource, recourse was had to the army. Drafts of soldiers were sent round to the Nore from almost every garrison in the kingdom between Berwick-on-Tweed and Cornwall. From London six companies of the King's Guards were sent off on board ship, and eight companies of the Coldstream. The whole of the "Admiral's Regiment," of which the King's brother, James, Duke of York, was colonel, received orders to embark; as did the Holland Regiment, as the famous regiment of the line, nowadays known as the "Bufs," was then called. The Royal Scots—

Dumbarton's drums clash o'er the tide!

—recently arrived in England from employment under the French monarchy, were told off to the fleet, and marched in haste across from Rye in Sussex to the Medway hoys awaiting them at Chatham. Pepys saw some of the Guards go off to the fleet. “Down to Blackwall and there saw the soldiers (who were by this time gotten most of them drunk) shipped off. But Lord ! to see how the poor fellows kissed their wives and sweethearts in that simple manner at their going off, and shouted and let off their guns, was strange sport.”

From materials such as these ; a handful of genuine seamen and Thames watermen, several score of pressed landsmen, and a strong detachment of soldiers ; was the crew of the *Loyall London* made up to its allotted number, 470 men.

With regard to the officering of the *Loyall London* it was otherwise. The King’s service was viewed with other eyes among those from whom the officers were mostly drawn. Of officers and “volunteers of quality” for the quarter-deck in the days of Charles the Second there was never any lack. As they had done in the year before at the outset of the war, so they came forward now. The galleries of Whitehall and the precincts of the *Corps de Garde* formed once again, that July of 1666, the setting for many a scene of tender parting :—

Farewell, farewell !—the voice you hear,  
Has left its last soft tones with you ;  
It next must join the seaward cheer,  
And shout amid the shouting crew.

Lord Rochester, for one volunteer, came forward a second time and entered himself on board the *Victory* with Sir Edward Spragge, Admiral of the Blue. "Sir Robert Leach, another volunteer," wrote Clifford from the Nore, "is come with a full persuasion, grounded on many dreams, that he shall kill De Ruyter with his fusee!"

Nine out of ten of the King's pages of honour applied for leave to do duty on the quarter-deck. It was the fashion of the hour. Gay young Guardsmen discarded for the time being their gold-laced uniforms and feathered hats for a "Volunteer's red coat" in the fleet. Every young gallant who had social influence, or a pretty sister, applied for a commission. They pestered the authorities with requests to be allowed to go afloat, and a good many of them, as it would seem, not unsuccessfully.

With Monmouth cap and cutlace by my side,  
Striding at least a yard at every stride,  
I'm come to tell you, after much petition—  
The Admiralty has given me a commission!

It is the fashion among some people to say hard things of the morals of the men of that time, to look austere on these light-hearted gentlemen of the Stuart Court in its heyday; yet they were at least patriotic. They were ever ready to face the national enemy and risk their lives for their country and their King.

A sense of *noblesse oblige* attracted the courtiers to the quarter-deck in swarms, and made volunteering for the Sea-Service the fashion.

These, for instance, were some of the men who got themselves appointed as volunteers—

Rash inconsiderate fiery voluntaries  
With ladies' faces and with dragons' spleen,

and served under fire in the opening battle of the war. The Duke of Buckingham did duty on board the *Prince*, the Earl of Devonshire, the Earl of Portland, Lord Muskerry, and the Hon. Richard Boyle (second son of the Earl of Cork) on board the *Royal Charles*. Another volunteer was Lord Buckhurst, who from on board his ship penned the set of verses beginning—

To all you ladies now at land  
We men at sea indite.

Sir William Berkeley, as Rear-Admiral of the Red, was on board the *Swiftsure*; the Earl of Marlborough was captain of the *James*. Other "volunteers of great quality" were the Dukes of Monmouth, Norfolk, and Richmond, and the Earl of Oxford.

When the enemy were not in sight they played cards and diced, and gave one another IOU's; so the time was wiled away.

To pass our tedious hours away  
We throw a merry main  
Or else at serious ombre play—

wrote Buckhurst from his cabin. On the day of battle they stood at their posts, with keen, calm eye and stern-set face, fearlessly amidst the bullets, jesting at narrow escapes, listening unmoved to the shattering crash of the round-shot on the ship's timbers, or quietly watching the throbbing glare through the smoke as some deadly fireship drew



near—of that stamp were they and so they took things, facing their fate with fine courage and a light heart.

La vie est brève : Un peu d'espoir,  
Un peu de rêve ; Et puis—bonsoir !—

that was the spirit of the time and their philosophy.

One of those on board the *Victory*, a consort of the *Loyall London* in her first battle, was the Reverend Samuel Speed, M.A., “that famous and valiant sea-chaplain and sailor,” afterwards vicar of Godalming, who got himself appointed chaplain to Sir Edward Spragge. His place, of course, was with the wounded in the cockpit, but he would not stop there. He could not refrain himself, we are told, from leaving his proper duty, attendance on the dying, and running up on deck, now and then, to lend a hand at the guns:—

His Chaplain fell to his wonted work,  
Cried “Now for the King and the Duke of York !”—  
He prayed like a Christian, and fought like a Turk ;  
With a thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump,  
Thump, thump, a thump, thump.

As Sir John Birkenhead told in his ballad on the battle of St. James's Day.

While the men were being hastened on board the *Loyall London* in batches, the ship was being masted and rigged at Deptford Dockyard.

The utmost importance was attached to sending her off to the fleet with all despatch. The King and the Duke of York, with Sir Jeremy Smith, Admiral of the Blue, the officer appointed to hoist his flag in the *London*, “went down,” we are told, personally,



“to hasten the ship away.” In the result, “she sailed with the carpenters still at work on board, and only a few of her guns.”

Alarmist rumours of the doings, or the supposed intentions, of the enemy were flying about wildly. That was one consequence of England having lost command of the sea.

De Ruyter and the Dutch fleet had been off the coast for some time, cruising to and fro between Orfordness and Dover, causing continual scares of invasion up and down the coast. The enemy were reported to be from 100 to 120 ships in number, and to have on board 7000 soldiers. A French army, said one report in addition, was encamped at Calais in readiness to cross over as soon as the troops with De Ruyter's fleet had been landed to secure the place of debarkation. Reports from Suffolk stated that a number of the enemy's frigates had been seen off Aldborough, taking soundings close inshore.

All the seaport towns, from Newcastle round to Weymouth, were ordered to put themselves in a condition of defence; the militia were ordered to march to the coast; auxiliary levies were to be enrolled. The beacons were to be watched by night and day, and notices were issued that “on their firing all men between sixteen and sixty are to appear at the rendezvous appointed by the deputy-lieutenants.” A letter from Dover on the 12th of July described how “sixty men of the trained-band watch nightly; the Castle bulwark and fort are on double guard.” “All

Kent," said another letter, "is in arms with strong guards and resolved spirits." As far west as Lyme in Dorsetshire, a watch of twenty-five men was kept under arms every night, and the guns of the fort were kept "constantly charged."

The *Loyall London* joined the fleet at the Nore on the 11th of July. She came in with only ten of her new battery of "cannon of seven," to replace the burst guns, as yet on board. Another new ship, the *Cambridge*, a two-decker, which joined at the same time, actually arrived without any of her guns on board. They also had "all bursted" at the proof butts. The guns for both ships arrived by hoy within a few days, and were swung on board as the *London* and *Cambridge* lay at anchor.

As soon as she had her guns in, the *London* moved down beyond the Nore and joined her consorts of the Blue Squadron in front of the enemy.

From all accounts, the appearance of the *Loyall London* gave unusual satisfaction to the fleet. "An excellent ship, of great speed, better than the former," said one who saw her arrive. "The *London*," said another, "sails better beyond compare than most of the frigates; draws little water for her bulk; and carries her guns eighteen inches higher than the *Royal Charles*: the whole fleet consider her as good a man-of-war as any in the world."

Pepys, voicing the general opinion at the Admiralty, calls the *Loyall London* "the best ship in the world."

By the 18th of July the fleet was so far complete and ready that Albemarle and Rupert were able to write to the King that they "hoped to sail next day." They were still sadly short of men for the bigger ships, but by the eleventh-hour expedient of taking all the men out of a number of the fourth and fifth rates, which were left behind riding at the Nore without a man on board, the two "Generals" were able to keep their word.

The signal to weigh anchor was made at day-break on the 19th, and shortly after six o'clock the whole fleet was on the move, with a light breeze from the south-west: ninety-one ships of war, with seventeen fireships, two hospital ships, twenty-four victuallers, and some fifty small vessels as tenders.

Now that they were on board and a battle close ahead of them, most of the pressed men would seem to have plucked up spirit. Sir Thomas Clifford, writing to Lord Arlington, speaks of the six miles long line of ships getting under way as a "grand sight." He wishes "the King could have seen it." "There is," he goes on, "a new air and vigour in every man's countenance, and even the common men cry out that if we do not beat them now we never shall do it. The cabins are all broken down and the ships clear." "The Commanders and men are in great appetite for an engagement," writes Mr. Hayes, Rupert's secretary, to Sir Joseph Williamson, Secretary of State. He "sees nothing," he adds, but "cheerful minds and watchful bodies."

We seamen are the bonny boys,  
 That fear no storms, nor rocks—a !  
 Whose music is the cannon's noise,  
 Whose sporting is with knocks—a !

Ahead of all sailed the squadron of frigates and the fireships, in charge of Sir Thomas Allin in the *Revenge*.

They anchored in the afternoon by the Middle Ground, where a shift of the wind to the north-west detained them during the next two days.

On the 22nd "a fresh gale coming suddenly at the S.E., the fleet weighed anchor again and got through the Narrows to the Gunfleet, which was a great day's work, and unless done in the nick had not been done at all. The Generals were all day on deck, and sometimes a little rough with the Pilots."

As the English approached, the Dutch drew back and concentrated. They kept just within sight from the masthead, "with their scouts visible from the deck." Before quitting their anchorage at the Gunfleet they had cut the buoy there adrift, "to make the English lose their way."

The English, however, did not lose their way. After anchoring for the night, "next day they plied towards the enemy, about 4 leagues ahead of us, about 100 sail. . . . The enemy plying to windward to sea." By nightfall the *Loyall London* and the main fleet were off Orfordness, where they anchored again. The Dutch were now about five leagues from them to the south-east.

Battle was to be given at sunrise, as it was in-



tended, and at one o'clock on the morning of the 24th the English fleet weighed anchor and made sail "cheerfully and beating drums." The weather, however, prevented any fighting. About half-past seven a thick mist rolled up, and once again anchors were let go. It cleared up towards two in the afternoon, and they got up anchors "with a fine gale from the N.E."

The Dutch fleet came into sight to windward between three and four o'clock, heading on the same course as the English. "We made all sayle we could to get ahead," says Clifford, "but they kept the wind of us." "Our officers," says somebody else, "looked on with a scurvey face." And not without reason. The situation for the moment looked extremely awkward. "They might have taken great advantage upon us, being out of line and very much scattered." Fortunately the enemy did not use their advantage. Towards evening they "tackt and stood from us," after which Albemarle and Rupert anchored once again. The Dutch anchored at the same time, four leagues off to south-east.

There both sides passed the night.

## VI

### THE LOYALL LONDON UNDER FIRE : "THE ST. JAMES'S DAY FIGHT"

There happen'd of late a terrible fray,  
Begun upon our St. James's Day.  
*Sir John Birkenhead.*

"**O**N the 25th of July, being St. James's Day, early in the morning, we saw the Dutch in a long line under our lee. The Weather was fair and clear and our Fleet bore down on 'em, standing the same course as they did and the headmost of our Fleet first attacked the headmost of theirs."

So an officer who fought in the battle described to Mr. Gumble, the Duke of Albemarle's secretary.

"Never," the officer goes on, "was an evener match fought at sea, for each Fleet consisted exactly of 90 Ships of War and 17 fireships: so that each ship had a ship of the adverse party to fight with." That was not quite the case, however. The Dutch had slightly the advantage in numbers: they were really 99 to 93 on the English side. In weight of metal the enemy had the advantage: 4704 guns against 4460 guns in the English batteries.

The English fleet weighed anchor at two in the morning on the 25th, and moving forward at a slow rate with a light north-easterly breeze, gradually neared the enemy. They came on in a long line, extending from van to rear nearly six miles, as a looker-on says, until between nine and ten o'clock. By that time they had ranged themselves nearly parallel with the three Dutch squadrons. Then the ships bore up together and stood in to engage from end to end of the line.

The White Squadron, Sir Thomas Allin's command, was a little in advance of the centre, the "main-battle," the Red Squadron, led by the Duke of Albemarle and Prince Rupert in person. The Red Squadron again was somewhat in advance of the *Loyall London* and her consorts of the Blue Squadron. In that order, our three English squadrons being ranged in a sort of *échelon*, the attack was opened; the White Squadron opening fire first, then the Red Squadron, then the Blue.

"About halfe an houre past 9 a'clock the Van of both Fleetes came near each other and ye headmost of their ships began to fire at ours, ours not firing till about halfe an hour after, and then the *Anne* fired and presently ye whole White Squadron was engaged with their Van."

Towards eleven o'clock the Red Squadron was getting into action.

The Blue Squadron was at that time nearing the rearmost squadron of the Dutch fleet, their own destined antagonists, and just coming into range.



GEORGE MONK, DUKE OF ALBEMARLE, K.G. ; ADMIRAL OF HIS MAJESTY'S FLEET.  
IN JOINT COMMAND WITH PRINCE RUPERT AT THE BATTLE OF ST. JAMES'S DAY  
*After Lely's portrait at Greenwich Hospital*





The *Loyall London* and the ships she led began firing about half-past eleven. They came into action in reverse order ; their rear division first and their van last. Sir Jeremy Smith's Rear-Admiral, Kempthorne, in his flagship, the *Defiance*, with a fireship close astern, showed the way. It comprised in all, ten ships.

The *Loyall London* and the centre division sailed on Kempthorne's quarter. Sir Jeremy had with him the *Bonaventure*, the *Yarmouth*, the *Portland*, the *Mary*, the *Rainbow*, the *Gloucester*, with the *Unity* and the *Amity* and two other captured Dutch warships, now doing duty in the English Navy.

A little further off, and last of all to come into action, was the proper van division of the Blue Squadron, led by Sir Edward Spragge in the *Victory*, with the *Dreadnought* and *Vanguard* and the *Advice* and *Adventure*, men-of-war, to support him, and a tail of five other men-of-war, Dutch prizes, and armed merchantmen.

The Blue Squadron as a whole, with its ex-Dutch warships and armed merchant-ships, was somewhat weaker than either of the other two English squadrons. They were faced by De Ruyter's strongest squadron. The enemy in front of them, with whom they had to fight, was the Amsterdam Squadron, the pick of the Navy of Holland in ships and men ; led by as hard a fighter as there was in any service, the fiery Cornelis Tromp, son of Blake's mighty antagonist, old Martin Tromp.

By noon the battle was general at all points.

"'Tis thought," says Mr. Gumble's naval friend, "never were more guns discharged in so short a time!"

Kempthorne and his group made first at the Dutch rear division, that of Admiral Van der Zaan, the *Defiance* and her fireship going straight for the enemy's flagship. But he had to deal with a wary and capable foe. Van der Zaan sank the English fireship at the outset, and then closing up, kept Kempthorne and his ships at bay. Immediately afterwards the *Loyall London*, using her turn of speed to advantage, reached the scene and bore into the centre of the enemy. She led in finely, a little way ahead of her division. Keeping another fireship at hand, close astern of her, the flagship of the Blue ranged up to Tromp's flagship and attacked the Dutch admiral fiercely. The *Dreadnought* and the *Portland* joined in next after the *Loyall London*, and faced Tromp and his two seconds ahead and astern, Van Amstel and De Haan. Then the other ships of the centre division came up to take their parts.

The fight went on for over two hours with fairly even fortune: a *mêlée* of ships all groping along in the dense fog of smoke that hung heavily all round, ship after ship now closing on an antagonist, now losing him and sheering off to find a fresh enemy and to open fire further on.

Each side fought it out its own way:—

Their mounting shot is 'on our sails designed,  
Deep in their hulls our deadly bullets light,  
And through the yielding planks a passage find.

Then, when the battle was at its hottest, a sudden disaster overtook one of the best ships of the *Loyall London's* squadron. "Between 2 and 3 a clock," says an officer, "we saw a ship burne and blow upp in ye Blew Squadron which we find was the *Resolution*." Admiral Tromp himself would seem to have had the principal hand in the destruction of the *Resolution*. This is the Dutch admiral's own account of what took place. The unlucky ship apparently also met her fate close to where the *Loyall London* was fighting. She was one of Kempthorne's van division.

"We played our guns at him, the Admiral of the Blue [i.e. the *Loyall London*], and at other English ships, whereof one being very much shattered and I finding it was practicable to get the weather of her, we boarded her, being backt with a fireship : and after we had batter'd her for a long time with continual broadsides, we fastened our fireship upon her to burn her to Ashes. That ship was called the *Resolution* and carried 64 brass guns and 2 iron ones, and having 140 men on board her, whereof 45, among whom were a Pilot and a Quartermaster, were saved by our men." So Tromp wrote in his report to De Ruyter.

Willoughby Hannam, one of Blake's old captains, commanded the *Resolution* on that day and was wounded on board. It was said, indeed, in the fleet, that he lost the *Resolution* by generously pushing her in between Kempthorne, his leader, and a Dutch fireship that was making for the Rear-Admiral of the



92 THE LONDONS OF THE BRITISH FLEET  
Blue. At any rate, the fireship grappled the *Resolution* instead.

Then there came a change in the general situation. Towards two o'clock, the Blue Squadron and its antagonists, while fighting fiercely, broke away bodily from the general line. There had been from the first a gap between Tromp and the rest of the Dutch fleet. As the battle proceeded it became wider.

In the outcome Sir Jeremy Smith and Tromp, closely engaged all the time in an independent duel, drifted off by themselves further and further. They made no effort to rejoin the main fleets on either side. Their attention was set on fighting their own duel to a finish. In the result, when, towards four o'clock, De Ruyter's van and centre squadrons gave way before Albemarle and Rupert and turned to retreat, the English Blue Squadron and Tromp were miles off, still in close action, firing their hardest and fighting as desperately as ever.

From two o'clock to four the fight was maintained by Sir Jeremy and Tromp on even terms. Neither side could claim any real advantage so far. Then there was a pause for nearly an hour, the wind falling away to nearly a dead calm. Both sides busied themselves during the breathing space with repairing sails and rigging and getting up fresh ammunition. According to Tromp's own official report, his flagship, the *Loyall London's* special opponent throughout, had fired away four and three-quarter tons of shot during the afternoon.

Towards six o'clock the breeze freshened. Tromp,

who was to windward, instantly took advantage of it. He saw his chance and struck hard. He swept down with four or five ships in support directly on the *Loyall London*, which at that moment was lying a little way apart, isolated from her consorts. The Dutch closed in on the *Loyall London* and made a desperate effort to overpower her, and if possible capture her. They set the *Loyall London* on fire and partially dismantled her; but the English flagship refused to be subdued. The *Loyall London's* men stood to their guns heroically and made a stubborn defence, although in the end they had to signal for help to the *Victory* and the *Defiance*.

Then once more the wind dropped. It came again in a few minutes, but by that time friends were closing up to the rescue, and the Dutch final attack on the *Loyall London* was foiled. Tromp and his ships now drifted slowly out of range, and the day's battle was over.

There was no more firing that night. Both squadrons remained in presence with lights showing. They were then somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Galloper Shoal, to the north of the Thames estuary.

Next day, until the forenoon, the two squadrons remained stationary. It was then, for the first time, that Tromp became aware of his leader's defeat, of what had happened to the rest of the Dutch fleet. He had heard their guns during the previous evening, and at night, too, occasional firing, growing more and more distant in the direction of the Dutch coast.

Stragglers from De Ruyter joined him a little before noon, from whom he heard that his leader had had the worst of the battle and had gone off in full retreat for the Scheldt. The English Red and White squadrons, Tromp also learned, were in pursuit and would now be between him and De Ruyter.

Thus Tromp's position was full of peril. He dared not stay as he was. Retirement at the first moment that he could move off was imperative. When at noon the breeze freshened he took immediate advantage of it, made sail and tacked and stood away to the eastward.

The *Loyall London* and the ships of the Blue Squadron followed the enemy at once.

"We stood after them with all sail we could make until evening, when six or seven more of ours came, with the Rear-Admiral of the Red with his main topmast down, and two frigates." These joined Sir Jeremy Smith in the chase. The Dutch for the most part kept a lead of about two miles in advance; although some of their rearmost ships were at times close enough for the leaders of the English pursuit to exchange shots with them.

Then, on that, there opened a new phase.

The booming of the Blue Squadron's guns brought out Albemarle and Rupert, then under sail off the Dutch coast. With the White and Red squadrons they had driven De Ruyter to take shelter behind the Wielings, a range of shoals off Flushing. Albemarle and Rupert were standing on and off to seaward, watching the enemy, when they heard firing



away to the west. At once they realized that a prize worth winning was offering itself. They had only to stand out to sea to cut Tromp off and capture him and his entire squadron.<sup>1</sup>

Albemarle and Rupert put to sea early on the morning of the 27th with the wind at the north-east, favourable for the proposed enterprise. During the forenoon they sighted Tromp far out at sea, and a little later they made out the Blue Squadron following in pursuit. Tromp was making slow progress. He had to work against the wind all the way, as of course had the *Loyall London* and the rest of Sir

<sup>1</sup> According to the journal of an officer in the Red Squadron, this is how things shaped themselves with the main body of the fleet, from the time De Ruyter began his retreat on the afternoon of the 25th, down to Albemarle and Rupert's move to cut Tromp off.

"Wee continued chasenge and fighting with ye rest of their Fleete till it was darke.

"About 10 at night a great new shipp of theirs which had been brought by the lee by the White Squadron was burned and blew upp.

"About 12 Bankert's ship, brought by the lee also by the White Squadron, was burnt and blew upp.

"Thursday morning the wind was S.W. and as soone as it was light the Red and White Squadrons chased the body of the Dutch Fleet with which they had lost company all night, being in number about 40, but it being little wind few of our shippes could come up with them but about 9 a clocke one of our fireshipps attempted to get on board De Ruyter but was put off and burnt in vaine.

"About 10 ye *Soveraigne* being in shallow water tacked and soone after ye whole fleet tacked, except some few frigotts yt chased them quite into the Wielings, and then wee tacked and stooode into the Sea ; and about 2 in ye afternoone wee saw the rest of the Dutch Fleete chased by the Blew Squadron, but no gunns fired by either, but observed the Blew to windward of them. There being little wind that afternoone wee came not soe neare the Blue Squadron to be discovered by them although wee made them very plainly.

"About 5 the Generalls tacked and stood towards the shore hoping by that meanes to prevent their getting into harbour."



Jeremy's command. Albemarle and Rupert now headed towards the approaching ships in order to bar Tromp's progress. Then they lay-to, right across the enemy's course, expecting the Blues to force Tromp down on them. Thus they would have the enemy between two fires.

Sir Jeremy unfortunately lost his splendid chance. Late in the evening the pilot on board the *Loyall London*, becoming nervous as it would appear, advised Sir Jeremy to alter course. The flagship, declared the man, was running into shoal water. Believing the pilot, the admiral hauled up to windward at once, and Tromp materially increased his lead. After that it was found impossible to get near the Dutch again.

Sir Jeremy made a bad mistake. The hauling up of the *Loyall London* at that moment staggered the rest of the squadron. It amazed and exasperated several of the captains. One officer, indeed, Sir Robert Holmes, Rear-Admiral of the Red on board the *Henry*, between whom and Sir Jeremy there was an old feud, went, it is told, further than words. Furious with disappointment when he saw the *Loyall London* turn to windward, Holmes fired two shotted guns point-blank into the stern windows of the flagship as a deliberate mark of contempt for his leader. Three days later, at the Council of War before Albemarle and Rupert and the assembled flag-officers, Holmes roundly accused Sir Jeremy of cowardice. The allegations fell to the ground before a subsequent Court of Inquiry, convened at White-

hall by order of the King, but the affair did not rest until Smith and Holmes had fought a duel over it. The meeting was a bloodless one, it would seem, as both men appeared at Court a day or two afterwards "without a scratch."

Darkness came on very soon after the Blue Squadron turned aside. Then it was Tromp's turn—his last cast. He had to get past Albemarle and Rupert, who were lying in wait across his course. The Dutch admiral had every light put out on board his ships. By that means he first of all disappeared from the view of the look-outs on board the leaders of the Blue Squadron. Then, shaping his course with masterly skill, under cover of the darkness, Tromp steered right round the sixty English men-of-war of the Red and White squadrons that lay dead ahead in his path. At the break of day next morning he had worked his way to windward of them, and was already in safety.

This was the closing scene of all, as witnessed from on board the *Royal Charles*, whence Albemarle and Rupert looked on at Tromp's escape on the morning of the 28th of July.

"At daylight ye Generalls weighed anchor, the wind being Easterly, but little wind, and wee saw passe by him to windward that 32 saile of Dutch that had ye day before been chased by ye Blew, but wee not seeing the Blew with them wondred at it and heard when they came to us (w<sup>ch</sup> was about 2 a'clock yt day) that at nine ye night before S<sup>r</sup> Jeremey Smith's pylot perswading him they were neare ye

Shore, he with all ye Blew tacked and stood into ye Sea by w<sup>ch</sup> means ye said 32 Dutch went all into the Wheelings."

So the St. James's Day Fight reached its *finale*. The English were left masters of the Narrow Seas, free to sweep the coasts of Holland from end to end.

The Duke of Albemarle, in his report to King Charles, gave the *Loyall London* high commendation. "Sir Jeremy," he said, "had more men killed and hurt and his ship received more shot than any other in the fleet." The actual casualty list reported from the *Loyall London* was forty-five men killed, and sixty-one wounded; more than twice the number, as a fact, returned from any other ship.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

During August the *Loyall London* was at "Sir Robert Holmes' bone fire," and was actively represented by a landing party on the occasion; a disastrous day for Holland when an inshore squadron with the boats of the English fleet destroyed the vast storehouses of the Dutch East India Company at Ter Schelling, together with practically the entire

<sup>1</sup> The Dutch lost in the battle and the chase after it, as it was reported, twenty men-of-war, and four thousand seamen killed (including four of their admirals). They took home also three thousand wounded. Eight or nine Dutch captains were reported as among the killed. The English losses, on the other hand, were one man-of-war, the *Resolution*, burnt in action, and four fireships "expended," as the official term went, while their "butcher's bill," the sailor's phrase for the casualty list, was set down as from three to four hundred men all told, including five English captains killed. The Dutch practice of firing high accounted largely for the comparatively light English list.

Dutch Indiaman fleet, upwards of a hundred and sixty vessels; causing a loss to Holland equivalent to a million and a quarter sterling at the present day.

After that, on the 1st of September, there was very nearly another battle with De Ruyter, who, with a refitted fleet of eighty sail, had come down the Dutch coast to try to meet the French fleet which was reported to be coming north to join him. A storm, however, prevented the English and Dutch fleets engaging off Boulogne, although both had cleared for action. The capture on the 18th of September, off Rye Bay, of a French man-of-war which had been separated from its consorts in the same storm, and ran into the middle of a squadron of the English fleet by mistake, taking it for friends, closed the campaign. De Ruyter returned to his home-ports, and the French squadron turned back to Brest and La Rochelle without having joined company with the Dutch.

Apparently the *London* had also a fight on her own account with the French. Says an officer's letter:—"The *London* has come into the Fleet somewhat shattered, having met two French men of war who fought stoutly; they have double the number of men the English ships have."

In October came the general return of the English fleet to Portsmouth and Chatham, to lie up for the winter.



## VII

### THE TRAGEDY OF THE MEDWAY RAID

**J**UST a year and three days from her launch the *Loyall London* lay a burned-out wreck at the bottom of the Medway. The City's gift was one of the principal of De Ruyter's victims when the Dutch admiral raided the Medway in June, 1667.

As early as the February of that year the decision had been come to at Whitehall not to fit the fleet out for the ensuing summer. For one thing, there was no money to do it with. The huge sum of £900,000 (equal to between four and five millions sterling to-day) of the money voted by Parliament for the Navy, was, literally, "missing." "The Parliament," says Pepys, "do find the King should have £900,000 in his purse." How it had gone even King Charles himself did not know. Lady Castlemaine had no idea. Only there remained the fact of the empty cash-box.

The King and his Council on that consoled themselves with the thought that, as negotiations for peace were pending, there might after all be no need to mobilize the fleet for another campaign. Then,

while they were in this frame of mind, a secret and confidential letter was handed in at Whitehall. It did its work. Charles and his advisers let themselves be beguiled by a craftily designed message from Versailles, to the effect that the French king had learnt directly from the Hague that "the Dutch would have no fleet at sea this summer." That subtly planned piece of perfidy settled the matter. Two small squadrons of the third and fourth rates, it was now decided, would suffice for the year's service: one for police work in the Channel, the other for a cruise in the West Indies. The rest of the fleet might remain laid up at harbour moorings, just as the ships had paid off at the close of the last campaign, lying unrigged and without guns or men.

Peace was no doubt in the air. But it was nowhere else. Commissioners on both sides were talking things over at the Hague, but they were still only talking. No arrangement had yet been come to, or was in sight. The helpless situation of the English fleet at once attracted the attention of the Dutch, who, on their side, were quick to realize the tremendous opportunity.

They turned their eyes on the ships in the Medway, one of which was the *Loyall London*.

There our sick Ships in Summer lay  
Like moulting Fowl, a weak and easie prey.

"It being judged that the English would not have sufficient force to successfully meet the naval army of the States-General, it was resolved by the

Grand Pensionary that some important enterprise should be attempted, even to the entering of the enemy's ports. The military deputies of the Grand Pensionary were to be strongly urged to execute this design, and risk something with a view of being able to conclude with the enemy with greater celerity an honourable and assured peace." De Witt took counsel with Admiral De Ruyter, and preparations were set on foot with the utmost despatch to get ready a large fleet for the intended stroke.

At the same time every means was taken to keep secret what was going forward, and with success in the main, although undoubtedly some rumour of an impending danger to the ships in the Medway from a fireship attempt reached London during March. On the strength of that rumour Admiralty orders were sent to Chatham on the 25th of March, directing that the sixteen large men-of-war lying in the Medway should be moved as high up the river as possible. An iron chain, 800 yards long, with links  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches each in length, and of an inch and a quarter in thickness of metal, was also ordered to be made and stretched across the Medway, on floats, at a point opposite Gillingham, a village, in those days, two and a half miles below Chatham. Two guardships were to be moored "so that they may bring their broadsides to bear on the chain." Instructions were simultaneously sent down for the old blockhouse at Sheerness to be put in order. It was to have additional fortifications raised along the water's edge, and a strong garrison was to be placed there. Little atten-

tion, however, seems to have been paid to the Admiralty instructions, either at Chatham or at Sheerness.

Then came the starting of the Dutch fleet. De Ruyter set sail for the mouth of the Thames on the 3rd of June at the head of sixty sail of the line, besides frigates and fireships. Grand Pensionary De Witt accompanied the expedition, to witness what was done with his own eyes. "The Naval Army of the States," ran De Ruyter's orders, "shall make sail for the Thames, and, God willing, enter that river, and from thence the River Medway, which leads to Chatham and Rochester. There it shall, either by armed boats, fireships, or with as many men-of-war as possible, try, under the favour of Heaven, to destroy or take all the English ships of war that may be found before or near Chatham or elsewhere on the river, and to burn the King's magazines, the provisions and munitions of war that should be found in that place, or to render them, by whatever other means possible, totally useless."

The enemy anchored in the King's Channel at the mouth of the Thames on the 7th of June. On the 10th three Dutch ships attacked the fort at Sheerness, and after an hour and a half's sharp cannonading landed a force to storm it. The garrison drew off without offering serious resistance, and a Dutch captain hauled down the English flag and carried it to De Ruyter.

On the 11th of June the Dutch, incited by their easy success at Sheerness, pushed on and made



their first appearance in the Medway. They came up the river as far as the Mussel Bank shoal, about two miles below the chain at Gillingham. Five English fireships had been sunk at that point on the previous day to block the channel, and these detained the enemy in front of them successfully all the afternoon until the tide began to ebb, whereupon the Dutch gave over their attack for the time being.

On the 12th of June, having found a passage deep enough for all his ships to pass up the river, without regard to the sunken fireships, De Ruyter delivered his first grand attack. At ten o'clock, with a fair wind and tide, the Dutch came on in force. Two men-of-war led the way, with the Dutch fireships, all primed and ready to be set ablaze, following them close astern. After the fireships came the rest of the Dutch fleet.

Firing began fiercely on both sides as the fireships neared the chain; the Dutch leading ships replying vigorously to the shore batteries and the guardships. But the English guns apparently could not check or stay the enemy's progress.

On the wrong side of the chain for her own safety lay an English frigate, the *Unity*. She had fled up the river from Sheerness when the fort there was attacked, but could not get across the chain. The *Unity* was attacked at close quarters, boarded, and taken by the leading Dutch ship, Van Braakel's *Vreede*. Immediately afterwards one of the fireships charged the chain and got hung up on it. A minute



RED ENSIGN : SAID TO BE THAT OF THE GUARDSHIPS  
DESTROYED BY THE DUTCH IN DEFENCE OF THE CHAIN ACROSS  
THE MEDWAY—NAME OF VESSEL NOT IDENTIFIED



10. VII. 1866

JACK, SAID TO BE THAT OF THE *ROYAL OAK*  
BURNED BY THE DUTCH IN THE MEDWAY

THE MEDWAY RAID : TROPHIES NOW AT AMSTERDAM



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later a second fireship charged the chain. This time it gave way, or sagged with a deep bight. That rendered the chain passable for all the Dutch fleet. It was afterwards cut, or unhitched somewhere, leaving a clear way over. One of the links of the chain is preserved to this day at Enkhuysen, in Holland.

Now all was open for the attack to proceed, and without delay it was pressed home fiercely.

A third Dutch fireship began the fighting by running alongside the guardship *Mathias*, a vessel formerly taken from the Dutch, now used as an English man-of-war, and grappling her fast. The *Mathias* took fire and was ablaze at once. She burned ultimately to the water's edge and blew up. Two fireships then stood in for the second guardship, named the *Charles V* (another ex-Dutch man-of-war). One fireship was sent to the bottom by a cannon-shot as she came on. The other was also sunk, but not until she had got alongside her prey and had set the guardship on fire. The *Charles V* burned all day and blew up after dark.

The two batteries erected to support the chain were firing on the enemy during part of the time, but they could effect little or nothing to turn the hapless fortune of the day for England. "Our men," according to the *London Gazette*, "made a stout resistance and showed infinite courage." According to the Dutch official account, on the other hand, "the batteries, after having lost some men, were abandoned."



Now came the turn of the bigger ships. After this it was that the most discreditable event of the day for the Royal Navy happened. Moored a little way above the chain, with her lower masts in, and only thirty-two of her hundred guns on board, lay the *Royal Charles*, admittedly the most powerful man-of-war in the world at that day. She was Cromwell's great *Naseby*, renamed at the Restoration, and rearmed and redecorated at immense expense. As to this last detail, it was said that the carving and gilded work in the *Royal Charles* by itself had cost £10,000.

This magnificent man-of-war, lying there without guns or means of defence on board, just swinging at her moorings, the Dutch captured and carried off, without a shot being fired from the ship in her own defence. They simply boarded the *Royal Charles* with a couple of small boats under a Captain Tobias, made the half-dozen ship-keepers their prisoners, and took possession.

It was not for want of warning that the great ship was lost. The Chatham Dockyard officials had been repeatedly warned before the arrival of the Dutch in the river to take special care for the safety of the *Royal Charles*. They had been explicitly ordered to remove her at once to a safer berth higher up, but had by sheer negligence failed to do this. Probably they had intended to do so, but with the general state of disorganization and indiscipline in the yard, it proved to be nobody's business to see to the matter and it was shelved. It was put off from day

to day, and then, in the panic and confusion of the final moment, when the attack on the chain was made, the whole matter was forgotten. So it came to pass that the *Royal Charles* was left in an exposed position, a tempting bait, and became in the end an easy capture for two row-boats. "In the operation of carrying her off, the Dutch showed great skill and seamanship, heeling her over to make her draw less water, and taking her down at a time, both for tide and wind, when the best pilot in Chatham would not have attempted it."

Towards evening the Dutch took a third English man-of-war—again a ship that had formerly been theirs—the *Santa Maria* of seventy guns. By that time, however, the tide had fallen low and further attack was postponed until next day. A number of other large ships had been observed lying a little higher up. De Ruyter proposed to deal with them on the morrow. One of these ships was the *Loyall London*.

The Dutch made their second day's attack reinforced by a number of their best fireships. Six picked men-of-war were told off to lead the way and engage Upnor Castle and the shore batteries at the outset. Under cover of their smoke the fireships were to pass up the river towards the big ships just beyond the castle.

After spending the forenoon in preparations, until the tide suited, about midday the Dutch attacking squadron got in its anchors. There was a light breeze from the north-east and a flowing tide.

They were within range of Upnor, and a battery recently thrown up on the Chatham side of the Medway, by two in the afternoon, and the six Dutch men-of-war attacked briskly. The guns at Upnor and the battery replied with as heavy a fire of cannon and musketry as they could, but it proved of no use for stopping the enemy. "The Dutch," says Pepys, "made no more of Upnor's shooting than of a fly."

Then the fireships took up their rôle. Pressing on ahead on the further side, shrouded in the smoke of the guns of their covering men-of-war, five Dutch fireships made for their allotted prey, three English men-of-war, lying by themselves lower down the river than the rest, about a cannon-shot above Upnor Castle. They were the *Royal Oak*, the *Loyall London*, and the *Royal James*. The three ships had all been scuttled, and lay sunk at their moorings, but in sinking, all three being high-sided first-rates, and the river at that point being shallow, the greater part of their sides remained towering above water. At the same time, unfortunately, the water all round remained deep enough for the light-draught Dutch fireships to sail up close alongside.

As the supreme moment approached, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, Admiral De Ruyter, left his ship and went on board the leading fireship. This was the *Rotterdam*, which passed the *Royal Oak*, the nearest of the three men-of-war, and made straight for the *Loyall London*. The *London* was picked out as being the biggest ship of the three.

Setting the fireship ablaze as she drew near, De Ruyter and the fireship's crew left the vessel and from their boat watched how she did her work. The *Rotterdam* brushed past the *Royal Oak* and then swept in alongside the *Loyall London*. She grappled the big English vessel, and in a few seconds the *Loyall London* was on fire.

The second and third Dutch fireships, running alongside the *Royal Oak* and the *Royal James*, set them on fire in turn. The remaining two fireships were sent in later to finish the three off. All the ships burned to the water's edge.

So ended, a twelve-month and three days after her launch, the *Loyall London*.

Satisfied with their afternoon's work, the enemy drew off down the Medway as the tide began to ebb. They had done what they had set out to do.

Little or no serious attempt at defence would seem to have been made on board either the *London* or the *James*, although it would appear that there were some soldiers on board, who had been hurried from shore at the last moment to try to keep the Dutch boats off with musketry. Probably these men abandoned the ships when they saw the fireships coming in their direction.

There was something paralysing in the dread that the approach of a fireship seemed to cause among those on board a threatened ship, from all accounts:—"the dreadful effect of these fireships." "When an enemy's fireship approached," described Pepys to Evelyn, "the most valiant commander and com-



mon sailors were in such consternation that altho' then, of all times, there was most need of the guns, booms, etc., to keep the mischief off, they grew pale and astonish'd, as if of a quite other mean soul, that they slunk about, forsook their guns and work as if in despair, everyone looking about to see which way they might get out of their ships."

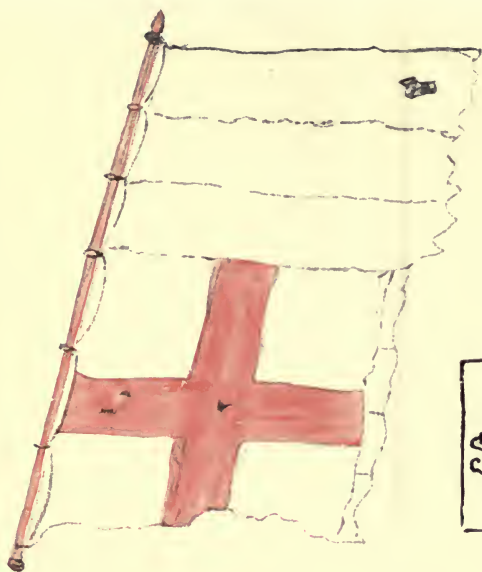
Only one of the three ships made a fight for it—a fight the sequel to which is the one redeeming incident of the disgraceful business.

The one honourable incident in the dreary record of shame and humiliation at Chatham took place on board the *Royal Oak*. She was lying nearest to the enemy of the three. The *Loyall London's* berth was, as we have seen, in the centre; the *James* lay a little upstream. At the last moment, as the Dutch were coming up the Medway, a party of soldiers under the command of a land officer, one Captain Douglas, clambered on board with orders to hold the ship. The *Royal Oak*, like the two others, had been scuttled, but had only sunk down, resting on a mud flat, to the height of her lower-deck ports.

Captain Douglas's defence of the *Royal Oak* is a tale to be remembered with pride. The enemy came on and at once attacked the three—first the *Loyall London*, then the *Royal Oak*, then the *Royal James*. The *Royal Oak* beat off two attacks. The third attack succeeded. A Dutch fireship grappled her, swung alongside, and set her ablaze. Springing overboard at the last moment, to escape by swimming, the defenders of the ship made their way



RED ENSIGN ; SAID TO BE THAT OF THE ROYAL CHARLES,  
CARRIED OFF BY THE DUTCH IN THE MEDWAY



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WHITE ENSIGN ; SAID TO BE THAT OF THE FRIGATE UNITY,  
BOARDED AND TAKEN BY THE DUTCH IN THE MEDWAY

THE MEDWAY RAID : TROPHIES NOW AT AMSTERDAM



to the shore—all except their officer, this same Captain Douglas, whose regiment one would like to have known the name of. He had no orders to retire, he said, and he declined to leave the ship until he was told to. So he answered to some of his men who, as they quitted the blazing wreck, implored their captain to come with them. Like the Roman sentry whose skeleton in armour was found at his post in the ruins of Pompeii, overwhelmed where he stood, the heroic young officer flatly refused to leave the *Royal Oak*. “It was never known,” he calmly said, “that a Douglas quitted his post without orders!” Resolutely and firmly, he remained behind alone ; to die in the flames.

“Whether it be wise for men to do such actions or no,” says old Sir Richard Temple, “I am sure it is so in States to honour them. So fine an example of heroic self-sacrifice is a priceless possession to a great people.” Says a contemporary poet in the style of the period :—

Down on the deck he laid himself and died,  
 With his dear sword reposing at his side,  
 And on the flaming plank he rests his head,  
 As one that warmed himself and went to bed ;  
 His ship burns down, and with his relics sinks,  
 And the sad stream beneath his ashes drinks.  
 Fortunate boy ! if either pencil's fame,  
 Or if my verse can propagate thy name,  
 When Cæta and Alcides are forgot,  
 Our English youth shall sing the valiant Scot !

That unfortunately is hardly the case in our times. Music-hall inanities and sporting trivialities are more to the taste of “our English youth” of the present day.



During July salvage parties weighed up the wrecks of three burned and sunken victims of De Ruyter's raid, the *Loyall London* and her ill-fated consorts, cleared out their guns and ballast, and pumped what was left of the hulls dry. As has been said, the three ships having been scuttled as the Dutch approached, had sunk to the level of their lower-deck ports before the fireships got alongside. Thus practically half of each hull had escaped destruction.

On being raised the wrecks were surveyed, and it was proposed to rebuild the upper-works of both the *Loyall London* and the *James* upon what remained of the hulls. The *Royal Oak* had suffered worst of the three and her wreck was broken up, the timber being used for repairs in other ships. The dockyard authorities at Chatham, however, had no means for doing the rebuilding, and in consequence the Admiralty sent orders to rig jury-masts on the first two and sail them, one to Deptford and the other to Woolwich. Such were the directions received, with the significant caution that they were "not to send the *Royal James* and *London* down till peace is proclaimed."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dutch frigates and privateers swarmed at the mouth of the Thames and off the coast between Berwick and Dungeness, behaving in the most insolent way and stopping the English coastwise trade. The weekly market ships with poultry, eggs, butter, and cheese from Suffolk to London dared not start. The Tyne colliers were blockaded in port, sending up the price of coals in London to famine rates. "Such is the want already of coals," writes Pepys, "and the despair of having any supply by reason of the enemy's being abroad, and no fleet of ours to rescue them, that they come this day (June 28th) to £5. 10s. per chaldron."

At the last moment, it is curious to note, when, in September, the remains of the two ships had been rigged and were ready to start, an unexpected difficulty cropped up. The men told off to take the *James* and the *Loyall London* round mutinied. They refused, they flatly declared, to trust themselves "on board two burned-out wrecks." The officer appointed to sail the *London* round, indeed, lost his temper, and went to the Commissioner's office and "behaved obstreperously." "The *Royal James* and *London* being ready to sail," complained the Navy Commissioners in reporting the difficulty to Whitehall, "we sent a warrant to Thos. Streton to take charge of the *London*. He came and threw it at us and refused to go, and Robt. Sansum who had a warrant for the *James* will not go either."

Pilots had to be sent for from Deptford, "because the boatswains will not take the charge on themselves." By that means in the end, with a fresh crew drafted from the ships just come in from sea, of sixty sailors and thirty-three dockyard ropemakers pressed for the occasion to help in navigating the wrecks, the remains of the *Loyall London* and the *James* set off on their voyage up the Thames on Sunday the 13th of September, escorted by the *Success*, a fifth-rate, and the *Cygnets*, a fireship.

\* \* \* \* \*

The burned-out shell of the *Loyall London* was docked at Deptford yard and rebuilt there—a three years' piece of work as it turned out, owing to want

of money and dockyard deficiencies—into our third *London* man-of-war. It cost the country £19,470 for the reconstruction of the hull by itself, a larger sum than it cost to build the *Loyall London* in the first place, and £1000 odd more was spent for her masting and rigging and guns—a total equal to not far short of £100,000 in present-day money.

The reconstructed ship was launched out of dock at Deptford at the beginning of June, 1670. There was no official ceremony; the dock gates were opened and out she went. She was then masted and rigged, and taken down to Woolwich, where the King came down to see her start round to the Medway to join the fleet laid up “in Ordinary” there. King Charles was always glad of a day off at either of the Thames dockyards; it was a pleasant change, no doubt, from sauntering in the Mall and the tiresome routine of Whitehall. He came down on the 24th of June, having previously sent word that the ship’s name was to be the *London*, not the *Loyall London*.

His Majesty was out of temper, as it would seem, at the way in which the City had taken a suggestion, put forward some time before as a “feeler,” that it would be a graceful thing if the Lord Mayor were to start another subscription towards the rebuilding of the burnt-out *Loyall London*. But even had the citizens been willing to present King Charles with another *London*, in regard to which a significant lack of interest had been displayed, the unfortunate Londoners, impoverished by their loss of trade through the Plague, by the Great Fire, as well as by

their heavy commercial losses during the two years that the Dutch War lasted, had no money to do it with. Moreover, indeed, the accounts for the building of the *Loyall London*, as has been said, had not yet been closed. Besides that there were at that moment certain political causes of friction between the City and the Court.

King Charles took the apathy of the Londoners in regard to the rebuilding of the *Loyall London* in bad part. It piqued him a good deal, as it appears, and he did a rather petty thing in consequence. He put his pen through the prefix *Loyall* when the proposal to rename the ship by her old name was laid before him. Her name, said His Majesty, should be registered on the list of the Navy henceforth simply as the *London*.

The King, accompanied by a brilliant suite of courtiers and the French Marshal de Bellefonds, personally saw the ship set off. "His Majesty," says a news-letter, "went to Woolwich on the 24th and was much satisfied to see the *London* sail towards Chatham, she being accounted the best sailer of her rate that has ever been in England."



## VIII

### ON BOARD THE *LONDON* AT SOLEBAY

“**S**OLEBAY FIGHT”—the battle of Southwold, on the coast of Suffolk, on the 28th of May, 1672—gave the rejuvenated *London* her baptism of fire, her first opportunity of settling accounts with the Dutchmen for the destruction of the *Loyall London*. James, Duke of York, afterwards King James the Second, commanded on the British side that day, the fleet under his orders being made up of two English squadrons, the Red and the Blue, and an allied French squadron, the White.

The *London* led the “main-battle,” the Duke’s own squadron; flying at the fore the flag of the famous Sir Edward Spragge, Vice-Admiral of the Red—one of the poet Dryden’s heroes:—

With him went Spragge, the bountiful and brave,  
Whom his high courage to command had brought.

Westminster Abbey now holds his dust.

How we came to fight the Dutch once more, how the third Dutch War broke out, is a matter that concerns the *London’s* record.

It is not a pleasant story how, under the influence of French gold and the arts of a bad woman, Charles

the Second set himself to goad Holland into war. It was a "quarrel," in the words of John Evelyn, "slenderly grounded and not becoming Christian neighbours." The Dutch for their part were not far off the mark when they said of the war—that "the French hired the English to fight for them."

England had at the outset a distinct grievance in regard to the restrictions on her trade with the Dutch East Indies; but no device was deemed too unworthy for use in getting up a *casus belli*. In November, 1670, for one thing, three and a half years after the event, the Dutch ambassador in England had been gravely informed that the King felt "much resentment for disrespects passed on his Majesty and the English nation in the late war." That referred in particular to a painting of the burning of the *Loyall London* at Chatham which had been hung in the Council Chamber at Dordrecht, which also showed, inset at the top, a vignette representing King Charles *en déshabillé*, sitting on the throne of England, with a partially nude mistress on each knee. The Latin of the legend on a medal that had been struck to commemorate the destruction of the *Loyall London* and her fellow-victims was also objected to. "Procul hinc mala bestia regnis," ran the words. The States General were most conciliatory. They offered at once to have the picture taken down and the print suppressed. "Mala bestia," on the medal, they pleaded, was merely meant as a general reference to the evils of war. No personal allusion to King Charles had been in-

tended. The English ambassador professed to be still dissatisfied, but said no more.

Another matter was the affair of the *Merlin* yacht, in August, 1671. The *Merlin*, one of our royal yachts, passed a Dutch squadron at anchor in Dutch waters off West Capelle, and because a flag-and-topsail salute was not rendered to her, as the captain considered, with sufficient promptness, two shotted guns were fired into the Dutch flagship. This piece of high-handedness, to use no other term, led to diplomatic correspondence, in which again the Dutch showed extraordinary forbearance.

The desired end was effected by brute force. A squadron of English men-of-war made a piratical attack on a Dutch homeward-bound merchantman fleet off the Isle of Wight. That made war unavoidable.

The *London* was taken in hand for sea in January, 1672. She was to be one of the flagships in the fleet, and it was announced that Sir Edward Spragge would hoist his flag on board. These, according to an official return, were the guns supplied to the *London*: all brass pieces:—

|                         |   |   |   |                     |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------|
| 26 demi-cannon          | . | . | . | on the lower deck ; |
| 28 whole culverin       | . | . | . | „ „ middle deck ;   |
| 28 demi-culverin        | . | . | . | „ „ upper deck ;    |
| 4 6-pounders            | . | . | . | „ „ forecastle ;    |
| 12 „ „                  | . | . | . | „ „ quarter-deck ;  |
| 2 „ „                   | . | . | . | „ „ poop :          |
| making 100 guns in all. |   |   |   |                     |

The gunwharf at Chatham Dockyard had the guns ready, and soon provided them. Getting together the crew for the *London* was a different matter.

As usual, manning the fleet proved the supreme difficulty. At the outset of the third Dutch War it gave the authorities more trouble than on any previous occasion—which is saying a good deal. The preliminary steps, which had been taken some time in advance, foreshadowed that very serious trouble was ahead of the Government before the fleet could put to sea. Apathy and a sullen dislike of the whole business was the prevailing tone throughout England in regard to the King's quarrel. The results of the various levies ordered were from the first unusually discouraging, although the local authorities in every county, under direct pressure from Whitehall, spared no efforts to carry out their instructions.

As early as January, 1672—when the attack on the Dutch Smyrna fleet was being planned—press warrants had been sent out throughout the country. Out-of-the-way places like Workington and Whitehaven in Cumberland, and fishing villages like Newlyn in Cornwall, were ransacked for men. At Bristol, the second seaport of the kingdom, on the press warrants arriving, the seafaring men were found to have “made off to Gloucestershire and Somerset, outside the Mayor's jurisdiction.” The men living in the Kentish seaports all tramped off inland, and were harboured by the cottage folk among the villages of the Weald. The general sympathy



with the runaways that was shown led to official proposals of retaliation. To compel the country folk to give up concealed seamen, it was suggested that the farmers' sons should be impressed and held to ransom. An order was actually sent to the heads of colleges at Oxford and Cambridge to search the undergraduates' rooms "lest seamen from the coast should have taken refuge and be hidden there."

Also, the quality of the men that were forthcoming was deplorable. Out of eighty men sent to the fleet from Cambridgeshire and Huntingdon, not three had ever seen the sea before. Some of the men sent from elsewhere were so ragged and diseased that the officers, though at their wits' end for sufficient hands to carry on duty, refused to take them on board.

What was even worse than the general disinclination to enter for the fleet, was this. Many a strong-backed young fellow, bred to the sea, who should have found his place at his gun in the ships of the King, had gone off to take service on board the Dutch fleet. Letters from English agents in Holland during March and April, 1672, describe how there were a "large number of Scots and Irishmen and some English seamen" on the books of the Dutch men-of-war. Everybody knew the reason. In Holland seamen were paid their wages. Money was the root of the evil. "If we have to serve afloat," said the men, "we will go where we will get our wages." It had been the same in the last war, when, as Pepys relates, there had been trouble "to secure our seamen from running over to the Dutch, which is a sad but

very true consideration." When De Ruyter burned the *Loyall London* in 1667, one of Pepys's friends at Chatham told him, "that he himself did hear many Englishmen on board the Dutch ships speaking to one another in English, and that they did cry and say, 'We did heretofore fight for tickets; now we fight for dollars!'" Said Andrew Marvell, indeed:—

An English Pilot too (Oh Shame! Oh Sin!)  
Cheated of's Pay, was he that shew'd them in.

Since then also, in addition, since the last war, an appreciable number of good seamen had found congenial employment across the Atlantic and were beyond reach in any circumstances. Not a few high-spirited sailor lads, turned adrift and penniless after the battles of 1666, had been attracted overseas by the tales that had come across to the stay-at-homes of what life out there was like—

. . . . the wild careening riot  
And the crowded, clam'rous shore—

and had gone westward to enrol themselves with Mansvelt and Henry Morgan among the "Brethren of the Coast." There was cash to be got over there, royal plunder to be shared—gold bars and bags of gold dust, precious stones, chests of Potosi silver and pieces of eight; homeward-bound galleons to waylay, freighted with the King of Spain's treasure; and a rollicking life at free-quarters between-whiles, when ashore for the "Hurricane Months,"

. . . . in the pleasant isle of Avès  
Beside the Spanish Main.

That was better than being left, as so many brave

fellows in England who had served King Charles before the enemy had been left—to tramp the country in rags and beg their bread by the wayside ; all the while with, as some of them had, heavy arrears of pay due ; twenty-six months, thirty-four months, fifty-two months in some recorded cases.

To go a-buccaneering was better than that, even on days when the galleons were not in sight :—

Oh, it was sweet in Avès to hear the landward breeze,  
Aswing with good tobacco in a net between the trees,  
With a negro lass to fan you, as you listened to the roar  
Of the breakers on the reefs outside that never touched the shore !

As in the previous war, recourse had to be had to the Army, but this time on a very much larger scale than before. Soldiers could, at any rate, work the upper-deck guns, leaving what seamen there were to attend to the sailing of the ship and to the heavy guns below. In addition to men from corps temporarily raised for the war, who were distributed throughout the fleet, these regulars were sent on board : the King's Regiment of Foot Guards, five companies ; the Coldstream Regiment, five companies (500 men) ; the Lord Admiral's Regiment, three companies ; the Holland Regiment (the Buffs), three companies ; the Garrison Regiment, two companies ; various Irish regiments, fifteen companies. In this way they made shift.

The final fitting out of the fleet was carried through with the help of a special grant got from Parliament under pressure, "twelve hundred thousand pounds by the way of ye Royal ayde," and a

donation from Versailles, sent over by Louis XIV—"6,000,000 pistoles, a present to his Majesty from the French King," which was landed at Rye with a show of secrecy as to its origin, and brought up to London at night, in wagons escorted by the Life Guards. The money provided for a fleet of between seventy and eighty men-of-war fit for the fighting line.

"Solebay Fight," as the Navy called it, the battle of Southwold Bay, the first great battle of the war, was fought on the 28th of May, 1672. There the *London* had her part at the head of the Red Division of the main-battle squadron, with, as has been said, the flag at the fore of Sir Edward Spragge, Vice-Admiral of the Red. James, Duke of York, the Commander-in-Chief, was at the head of the *London's* squadron. The Earl of Sandwich (Montagu) commanded the Blue Squadron. The White Squadron was made up of the allied French contingent, acting as part of the Duke of York's command under Charles the Second's treaty with Louis the Fourteenth.

This, briefly, is how the fight came on.

The Allied or Combined Fleet, numbering, all told, between ninety and a hundred ships, was lying on the 27th of May in Southwold Bay on the Suffolk coast, awaiting news that the Dutch had put to sea. Frigates were out scouting off the coast of Holland, but sent no word about the enemy.

Then came a bolt from the blue. De Ruyter himself brought the news—with the whole Dutch fleet



at his back. He all but surprised the Duke of York and his captains at anchor.

Nobody in Southwold Bay, as it would seem—except one man, the most experienced officer of all—anticipated an attack, although the wind had been easterly, from the dangerous quarter, all day on the 27th. According to the latest intelligence that the Duke had, the enemy were in port, and not likely to leave for the present. So secure, indeed, did they feel in Solebay for the present, that Captain Cox, the Duke's flag-captain, on the 27th, the very afternoon before the battle, had the *Royal Charles* heeled over on her side, careened at anchor, and scrubbed below the waterline.

The one officer who foresaw danger, having regard to the direction of the wind, was not listened to. He was laughed at. The Earl of Sandwich raised a warning voice at a banquet given on the night of the 27th on board the Duke of York's flagship. His hint at danger was received in a way that Lord Sandwich understood as conveying a reflection on his personal courage. So much so, indeed, that people afterwards went so far as to say that Lord Sandwich threw away his life in the battle in consequence of the Duke's sarcastic retort. That took place on Monday evening.

The first alarm was given between two and three o'clock on Tuesday morning, when one of the scouting frigates came into view under full sail and firing guns. Close astern of her followed half a dozen ships of the Dutch van squadron.

Only the alacrity and forlorn-hope energy that one and all displayed in the stress of the moment saved the Duke of York from an overwhelming disaster. There was not very much wind, but what there was blew right into the bay, tending to hold the Duke there while it brought De Ruyter on.

They had no time in some of the ships, it would appear, to get in their anchors. All they could do was to cut cables and make sail hastily to gain an offing. The English squadrons worked out on one tack, the French ships on the other. Many of the officers and some of the men were sleeping on shore when the alarm guns went off. Although they were hurriedly turned out by beat of drum "and bailiffs sent round to clear all the tippling houses," many were unable to get back on board. The fleet hastily stood out to sea, leaving behind the *Merlin* and two sloops to bring them off. Some did not get to their ships until after ten o'clock, four or five hours after the battle had begun.

The *London* went into battle that morning with four hundred barrels of powder in her magazines and seventy-five tons of shot (fifty tons of round shot, twenty tons of "hammered," and five tons of bar, grape, and canister). Forty rounds of ammunition for each gun was the allowance provided.

"We began the fight at seven in the morning," notes Sir Edward Spragge in his journal on board the *London*, "and at 8 the fleets on both sides were wholly engaged, which was prosecuted with much severity, being very little wind and sometimes calm.

About 9 o'clock an admiral with 14 sail (among which were two fireships) kept themselves in a body bearing down to my division until they found themselves warmly received, which made them keep their wind, upon which, the enemy bracing all sails aback, we laid our head-sails to the mast. Immediately after, one of their great ships sunk within musket shot of us."

This is how they fared on board the *London*, in the words of one who went through the battle on the quarter-deck, telling the story in the *Memoirs of Captain Carleton*.

"In the year one thousand six hundred and seventy-two, war being proclaimed with Holland," says the writer by way of personal introduction, "it was looked upon, among nobility and gentry, as a blemish, not to attend the Duke of York aboard the fleet, who was then declared Admiral. With many others, I, at that time about twenty years of age, entered myself a volunteer on board the *London*, commanded by Sir Edward Sprage, Vice-Admiral of the Red.

"We had not been in Solebay above four or five days," he goes on, "when De Ruyter, hearing of it, made his signal for sailing, in order to surprise us; and he had certainly had his aim, had there been any breeze of wind to favour him. But though they made use of all their sails, there was so little air stirring, that we could see their fleet making towards



THE *LONDON*, AS FLAGSHIP OF H.R.H. JAMES, DUKE OF YORK, LORD HIGH ADMIRAL, IN ACTION WITH DE RUYTER AT THE BATTLE OF SOLEBAY—28TH MAY, 1672  
*From a painting by W. Vanderveide*





us long before they came up ; notwithstanding which, our admirals found difficulty enough to form their ships into a line of battle, so as to be ready to receive the enemy.

“It was about four in the morning of the 28th of May, being Tuesday in Whitson week, when we first made the discovery ; and about eight the same morning, the Blue Squadron, under the command of the Earl of Sandwich, began to engage with Admiral Van Ghent, who commanded the Amsterdam squadron ; and about nine, the whole fleets were under a general engagement.

“The fight,” Captain Carleton proceeds, “lasted till ten at night, and with equal fury on all sides, the French excepted, who appeared stationed there rather as spectators than parties ; and as unwilling to be too much upon the offensive, for fear of offending themselves.”

Then our eyewitness tells us how the Duke of York came on board the *London* and hoisted the Commander-in-Chief's flag at the masthead and fought the battle to the end from the *London's* quarter-deck.

“During the fight, the English admiral had two ships disabled under him ; and was obliged, about four in the afternoon, to remove himself a third time into the *London*, where he remained all the rest of the fight, and till next morning. Nevertheless, on his entrance upon the *London*, which was the ship I was in, and on our hoisting the standard, De Ruyter and his squadron seemed to double their fire upon

her, as if they resolved to blow her out of the water. Notwithstanding all which, the Duke of York remained all the time upon quarterdeck; and as the bullets plentifully whizzed around him, would often rub his hands and cry, 'Sprage, Sprage, they follow us still.' I am very sensible latter times have not been over favourable in their sentiments of that unfortunate Prince's valour; yet I cannot omit the doing a piece of justice to his memory, in relating a matter of fact, of which my own eyes were witnesses, and saying, that if intrepidity, and undauntedness, may be reckoned any parts of courage, no man in the fleet better deserved the title of courageous, or behaved himself with more gallantry than he did."

Another officer of the *London* has something to say about the battle.

Dr. John Grandy, the "chirurgion" of the *London*, wrote this home. "The Duke," he said, "went on board the *London* and stood away after the Dutch, who had been engaged with the French two hours before, and weathering some of their leemost ships, fell briskly in among them; firing on both sides, not having with him above eight sail, whereof Sir J. Harman in the *Royal Charles* was one; and lay battering between the two fleets about an hour and a half, till night came on and the leemost Dutch ships bore away to leeward, and the windermost sprang their luff. . . . Night coming on all action was left."

"About 5 o'clock," records the Vice-Admiral himself, Sir Edward Spragge, in his private journal,

“His Royal Highness came on board the *London*, where we continued firing against the enemy’s line to windward of us till after 8 o’clock: De Ruyter about the same time bore away to leeward of us.”

Among the minor incidents on board the *London* during the battle that Captain Carleton himself was a witness of, were these.

“Another thing,” he says, “happened to a gentleman volunteer, who was aboard the same ship with myself. He was of known personal courage in the vulgar notion of it, his sword never having failed him in many private duels. But notwithstanding all his land-mettle, it was observed of him at sea, that whenever the bullets whizzed over his head, or any way incommoded his ears, he immediately quitted the deck, and ran down into the hold. At first he was gently reproached, but after many repetitions, he was laughed at, and began to be despised; sensible of which, as a testimonial of his valour, he made it his request to be tyed to the main mast. But had it been granted him, I cannot see any title he could have pleaded from hence, to true magnanimity, since to be tyed from running away can import nothing less, than that he would have still continued these signs of cowardice, if he had not been prevented.”

“I cannot here omit one thing,” he also says, “which to some may seem trifling, though I am apt to think our naturalists may have a different opinion of it, and find it afford their fancies no undiverting employment in more curious and less perilous reflec-



tions. We had on board the *London*, where, as I have said, I was a volunteer, a great number of pigeons, of which our commander was very fond. These, on the first firing of our cannon, dispersed, and flew away, and were seen no where near us during the fight. The next day it blew a brisk gale, and drove our fleet some leagues to the southward of the place where they forsook our ship, yet the day after they all returned safe aboard; not in one flock, but in small parties of four or five at a time. Some persons at that time aboard the ship, admiring at the manner of their return, and speaking of it with some surprise, Sir Edward Sprage told them that he brought those pigeons with him from the Streights; and that when, pursuant to his order, he left the *Revenge* man-of-war, to go aboard the *London*, all those pigeons of their own accord, and without trouble or care or carrying, left the *Revenge* likewise, and removed with the sailors on board the *London*, where I saw them: all of which many of the sailors afterwards confirmed to me. What sort of instinct this could proceed from I leave to the curious."

Continuing, Captain Carleton says:—

"The English lost the *Royal James*, commanded by the Earl of Sandwich, which about twelve (after the strenuous endeavours of her sailors to disengage her from two Dutch fireships placed on her, one athwart her hawse, the other on her starboard side) took fire, blew up, and perished; and with her a great many brave gentlemen, as well as sailors;

and amongst the rest the Earl himself, concerning whom I shall further add, that in my passage from Harwich to the Brill, a year or two after, the master of the packet boat told me that, having observed a great flock of gulls hovering in one particular spot of the sea, he ordered his boat to make up to it; when, discovering a corpse, the sailors would have returned it to the sea, as a corpse of a Dutchman; but keeping it in his boat, it proved to be that of the Earl of Sandwich. There was found about him between twenty and thirty guineas, some silver, and his gold watch; restoring which to his lady, she kept the watch, but rewarded their honesty with all the gold and silver.

“This was the only ship the English lost in this long engagement. For although the *Katherine* was taken, and her commander, Sir John Chicheley, made prisoner, her sailors soon after finding the opportunity they had watched for, seized all the Dutch sailors, who had been put in upon them, and brought the ship back to our own fleet, together with all the Dutchmen prisoners; for which, as they deserved, they were well rewarded. This is the same ship which the Earl Mulgrave (afterwards the Duke of Buckingham) commanded the next sea fight, and has caused to be painted in his house in St. James’s Park.”

The *London* in the course of the afternoon made an attempt to get up to the burning *Royal James*, the Earl of Sandwich’s flagship, in order to rescue the crew, and endangered herself in so doing. “About 2 o’clock,” says Sir Edward Spragge,

"could scarce weather the ruins of the *Royal James*, being all on fire: was forced to bear away to leeward of her in company with the *Charles*."

As to the general results of the battle, which, again in Captain Carleton's words, "lasted fourteen hours and was looked upon as the greatest ever fought between the English and the Hollander," this is how the day went with some of the *London's* consorts.

As an offset to the loss of the *Royal James*, we claimed to have sunk three Dutch ships and taken two. The *Victory* for herself claimed to have sunk one of the Dutch ships; the *Edgar* claimed another. Some officers, indeed, had an idea that five Dutch men-of-war had been sunk, but it had been difficult in the smoke and turmoil of battle to be sure. At any rate, as the fleet was on its way back to its anchorage after the battle, they passed the masts of two large ships sticking up out of the sea. "We were much amazed to find the masts of two great ships sunk near the shore, being principal ships of the Dutch." So one officer related. "The Dutch had one man-of-war sunk," says Captain Carleton, "though so near shore, that I saw some part of her mainmast remain above water; with their Admiral Van Ghent, who was slain in the close engagement with the Earl of Sandwich."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of the fate of one in particular of the ships of the Dutch fleet at Solebay Fight one would like to know something. That was the former English *Swiftsure*, captured in June, 1666. It was known that she was in the Amsterdam squadron of De Ruyter's fleet, and

Some of our ships had a very hard day of it at Solebay. The *Henry* fought seven Dutch men-of-war and three fireships for two hours. In that time her captain and every one of the officers were killed and two-thirds of the crew were put *hors de combat*. Incapable of defending herself, she was taken and a prize crew put on board. A Dutch seventy-gun ship was escorting her out of the battle when fortunately the *Plymouth* came up, attacked and drove off the seventy-gun ship, and, assisted by a rally among the imprisoned English crew, retook the *Henry*. "Such a spectacle for damage of masts, yards, and rigging," wrote an officer about the *Henry* after the battle, "I never yet saw so bad." The *Royal Katherine*, as has been said, was boarded and taken possession of by the Dutch, who took out the officers and a hundred and fifty men, who were all sent on board a Dutch ship. The rest of the crew were clapped under hatches. According to the official version of her recapture, the enemy had possession of the *Royal Katherine* for three hours. Then there was an alarm that the ship was sinking.

she was said to be captained by an Irish renegade with a crew of 340 men, all English, Scots, and Irish. So various reports sent over by secret agents in Holland to the Admiralty, now preserved at the Record Office, relate in detail. She had been altered somewhat, they said, externally, and her galleries cut away, and the name *Oude-horne* given her instead of her original name; but there could be no mistaking her English build. It was privately understood among the Duke of York's captains before the battle that the ex-*Swiftsure* was to be singled out if possible and no effort spared to retake her or send her to the bottom. Probably she kept out of the way: many Dutch ships made a very poor show. Not a word is said of her fate in the battle, or, indeed, of any officer having identified her.



The Dutch on that took off the hatches and called up the English prisoners to help save the ship. It proved a false alarm, whereupon the prisoners turned on their captors and, led by the boatswain and the carpenter, drove most of the Dutchmen overboard and rehoisted the English flag.

The flagship *Royal Charles* lost altogether over two hundred in killed and wounded. "Her hull," said an officer, "was so patched that I never saw the like." The *Victory* had a hundred and twenty casualties, including Lord Ossory, her captain, wounded. The *York*, a small ship, lost over a hundred. On board the *Rainbow* there were not thirty unwounded men left, including the officers. On board the *Success*, owing to the number of shots received between wind and water, they had to keep "continually pumping to make her swim." The *Antelope* was riddled from end to end close to the waterline. The *Resolution*, one of the ships of the *London's* division, showed "ninety patches, or shot boards, on her starboard side." She had seven feet of water in the hold.

Of the price in life paid by England for the victory. Our ablest sea-officer of the day was among the dead, the Earl of Sandwich, blown up on board his flagship the *Royal James*. Seven captains also fell: Sir John Cox, the Duke of York's flag-captain, Sir Freschville Holles of the *Cambridge*, Geoffrey Pearce of the *St. George*, Willoughby Hannam of the *Triumph*, John Waterworth of the *Anne*, and Captain Yennis of the fireship *Alice and Francis*.

Another naval captain, Walter Perry, acting as a volunteer, lost his life with Sandwich on board the *Royal James*. Four captains of Marines of the Duke of York's regiment, out of twelve, were killed at Solebay. The total casualties in officers and men were roughly put at about two thousand five hundred, and the estimate was admittedly under the mark.

Nobody had a good word to say for our French allies. They had done no fighting at all. They had only looked at the enemy. "They shott away much powder and shott at a great distance to noe purpose and kept out of reach of the guns of the Dutch."

The Duke of York, leading the Red Squadron in the *London*, followed to windward of the enemy, "keeping sight of the Dutch lights all night."

Next day they neared the enemy again, and the Duke "put out the signal to draw out into a line of battle, which was accordingly done, and hoisted up his bloody flag on the foretop masthead and bore away upon the Dutch." A thick fog, however, came on, which lasted an hour and a half. When it cleared the *London* and her consorts found themselves quite close to the enemy. "We were almost up to them, and the bloody flag was hoisted again." But once more the fog came on, and now thicker than ever. "We could not see a ship's length, but continued firing muskets, sounding trumpets, and beating drums to keep together." "The General," says Sir Edward Spragge on board the *London* in his journal, "putting forth a red flag near 5 o'clock

bore down upon the enemy, but of a sudden, a dark and thick fog covered us till 7 at night, blowing very hard. We were forced to unsling our topsail yard and reef our topsails. At 8 the whole fleet tacked, stemming away N.W., the wind at N.N.E. Keeping to windward of the Dutch, thick hazy weather, when we lost sight of them in the fog."

On the following day a frigate sent to reconnoitre came back with the intelligence that the enemy had withdrawn inside the mouth of the Scheldt, whereupon the English fleet headed for the Nore.

A very curious detail that is on record about the battle of Solebay may be mentioned here—the great distance at which the firing was heard. The wind was for most of the day from the north-east. It is said that the thunder of the guns was heard as far north as off Bridlington, 200 miles away. To the south they heard it on board the packet boat crossing from Calais to Dover. Inland it was heard at Brixworth, in Northamptonshire, 120 miles away, and also at Shrewsbury and on the confines of North Wales, 200 miles away. Sir Isaac Newton, then a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, heard the guns there. He was at work in his rooms, it is told, and went down into the hall, where the other Fellows had met and were wondering what had happened. "The enemy are in retreat," declared Newton; "the noise of the cannonading keeps ever getting further and further off." He was a true prophet.

There are many mementos of the battle, in the shape of rusty guns and cannon-shot and old anchors, that trawlers and fishermen off the Suffolk coast have hauled up from time to time. Two others are of another kind. All who know "Constable's country" know the Red Lion of Martlesham. That is one of our mementos of Solebay Fight, according to local tradition. The old inn sign is a ship's figurehead painted red, the same colour that it had when first washed ashore, from one of the Dutch men-of-war with which the *London* fought that day.

Yet another memento is this set of contemporary verses written by a Dunwich man who was an eyewitness of the battle from the shore.

One day as I was sitting still  
 Upon the side of Dunwich hill,  
     And looking on the ocean,  
 By chance I saw De Ruyter's fleet  
 With Royal James's squadron meet;  
 In sooth it was a noble treat  
     To see that brave commotion.

I cannot stay to name the names  
 Of all the ships that fought with James,  
     Their number or their tonnage;  
 But this I say, the noble host  
 Right gallantly did take their post,  
 And cover'd all the hollow coast  
     From Walberswyck to Dunwich.

The French, who should have joined the Duke,  
 Full far astern did lay and look,  
     Although their hulls were lighter;  
 But nobly faced the Duke of York  
 (Though some may wink and some may talk),  
 Right stoutly did his vessel stalk  
     To buffet with De Ruyter.



Well might you hear their guns, I guess,  
 From Sizewell Gap to Easton Ness,  
     The show was rare and sightly ;  
 They battled without let or stay  
 Until the evening of that day,  
 'Twas then the Dutchmen ran away,  
     The Duke had beat them tightly.

Of all the battles gain'd at sea  
 This was the rarest victory  
     Since Philip's grand armada ;  
 I will not name the rebel Blake—  
 He fought for Horson Cromwell's sake,  
 And yet was forced three days to take  
     To quell the Dutch bravado.

So now we've seen them take to flight,  
 This way and that, where'er they might,  
     To windward or to leeward.  
 Here's to King Charles, and here's to James,  
 And here's to all the captains' names,  
 And here's to all the Suffolk dames,  
     And here's the House of Stuart.

For many of the *London's* men, unfortunately, there was more to come after the battle. As things befell, some two hundred of the *London's* men never saw their homes again.

The bigger ships paid off at the end of August, on trustworthy intelligence reaching England that the Dutch had laid up their fleet for the year.

A considerable number of the seamen, released from the larger ships on the fleet paying off, were at once made use of for the manning of a frigate squadron, ordered to sea as the "winter guard." One of the frigates ordered out was the *Kent*, on board which, according to a note by Pepys in a manuscript at the Bodleian, the *London's* men were drafted, sufficient of them to form the crew of the *Kent*.

The frigates were much needed and were to sail at once, for the Dutch privateers in unusual force were reported to be swarming in the North Sea. As early as the second week in September, in fact, news had reached London that a large number of Dutch privateers were at sea, committing serious depredations and preying on English commerce in every quarter. They had already stopped the coal trade between the Tyne and the Thames. The laying up of the Dutch main fleet for the winter, a fortnight before ours, had turned adrift a crowd of seamen who had enabled the Dutch to fit out as a privateer every fast-sailing small vessel in harbour between Flushing and the Zuider Zee. Not only had the English coastwise trade been stopped, but the whole East Coast was in a state of great alarm. Every little seaside town was getting nervous for its own safety, and petitioning the county authorities for guns and gunpowder.<sup>1</sup>

To deal with the privateers, the Admiralty

<sup>1</sup> Here is one of these petitions. From it we get an idea of the state of things along the English coast. It was addressed to the Lord Lieutenant and Deputy Lieutenants of Norfolk, from Sheringham.

"Our Town Joynes," said the writers, "upon ye Maine sea, and we are afraid every night ye enemy should come ashore and fire Our Towne when we be in our Bedds, for ye Houses stand very close together, and all ye Houses thatched with straw, that in one houre's time ye towne may be burnt; for we have nothing to resist them but one Gunn with a broken carriage and foure Musquetts, which we bought at Our Own cost and charges; which is a very small defence against an enemy: and likewise we have no powder nor shot for ye said Gunn, nor Musquetts, when we stand in need. Wee therefore humbly beseech your Hon<sup>rs</sup> yt you would be pleased to consider ye danger wee live in, and that your Hon<sup>rs</sup> would grant us foure or five Musquetts more, and half a hund<sup>d</sup> pound of powder, and half a hund<sup>d</sup>

directed the winter-guard frigates to set out as soon as possible and cruise in the North Sea. The *Kent* sailed from the Nore in the last week of September. The next news of her, less than three weeks later, was that she was a total wreck—that she had been lost off the Lincolnshire coast with upwards of two hundred men.

The first news came by the way of Harwich, on the 18th of October. It was to the effect that the pinnacle of H.M. ship the *Kent* had come ashore on the coast of Lincolnshire with the captain and ten men, who reported that the ship had been wrecked in a storm on the Leman and Ower shoal, about thirty miles north-east of Cromer. Over two hundred men, it was stated, had been left on board, the ship was in a hopeless position, and water in her up to the gun-deck. The news was quickly forwarded to the naval dockyard at Harwich, the nearest port, whence the *Deptford*, a small frigate, was sent off to the scene of the wreck.

Before the *Deptford* got there, two rafts with a number of men on them came ashore at Mundesley and Winterton Ness. Another frigate, the *Antelope*, then at Boston, had also been despatched to render aid. The *Antelope* picked up the pilot of the *Kent* and seven men, "swimming and holding on to floating wreckage." According to them, the captain

pound of Bullet, and wee should think wee were able to defend ye attempt of a Dutch privateer." Sheringham, in reply, got six muskets and a supply of powder, shot, and match with the muskets, the only stipulation being that they should not be embezzled—that nobody should "imbocill ye said arms and ammunition."

had deserted the ship, after which they had kept on firing distress guns, but all in vain. In despair, at the last the rafts had put off, while some of the men tried to reach the shore on wreckage. A number of men still remained on board.

The *Deptford* and *Antelope* went out to the Leman and Ower, but returned to report that the *Kent* had broken up, and that they could find no trace of her crew. A report then came in that wreckage—among other things, the *Kent's* masts, some internal fittings and planking, and several gilt pieces from the “Great Cabbin”—had been washed ashore near Boston and Wainfleet. All who had been left on board were given up as lost, until a week later, when a Dutch privateer was brought into Harwich by the frigate *Portsmouth*. The privateer had on board twenty-six of the *Kent's* survivors. They said that they had “under great Straits and Shifts staid on her without fresh Water or Victuals, killing their Dogges, until the Monday following, when this privateer with much kindness took them inn, and was exceeding kind and careful of them, laying bedds in the Cook Room, and refreshing them with warm Drinks.”

The Dutch skipper, as it turned out, had proposed to take them into Yarmouth under a flag of truce. “Hastening thither he spied the *Portsmouth*, which he thought was a Collier, and made at Her, but when it was past recovery perceived his Mistake just as the *Portsmouth* was going to pour a Broadside on him. So he yielded with his 52 men.” The *Geeld-*



*seer*, as the privateer was named, was brought into Harwich by the *Portsmouth*, her Dutchmen being very kindly treated, it is stated, by Captain Page, commanding the English man-of-war, in return for their kindness to the *Kent's* survivors; and the Dutch skipper was also later on rewarded with a monetary grant from the Commissioners of Prizes.

Those on board the ill-fated frigate *Kent*, it may be noted by the way, put forward this theory to account for the disaster. Says a letter from Harwich (quoted in the *Verney Memoirs*): "The seamen beleieve She was bewicht: they tell Stories of a Crow hoveringe over them 2 days together in stormy Weather."

The court-martial on the disaster brought out that the *Kent* had been thrown away by her commander, Captain John Wood. The pilot of the *Kent*—all men-of-war carried pilots in the North Sea in those days—swore that Captain Wood had insisted on navigating the ship himself, had assumed the pilotage and refused to take advice. Though ignorant of where he was, he had rejected every warning that he was getting near dangerous waters. Then came the wreck.

The court convicted Captain Wood, and cashiered him and sent him to the Marshalsea prison. He was out a few months afterwards, thanks to his patron, Prince Rupert. Soon after that the name of John Wood appears on the list of officers of the Navy as a lieutenant, first in the *Assistance*, then in the *Princess* and in the *Lion*. After that he was a lieu-

tenant in Rupert's own flagship, the *Royal Sovereign*. In the end, Prince Rupert got Wood reinstated on the post list. Within a year of the wreck of the *Kent* he reappears as captain of the frigate *Bonaventure*. So Interest worked things in the days of Charles the Second. In later years Captain Wood took to Arctic exploration, and he did useful service in the Far North. He is said eventually to have been hanged at Yarmouth, "on account of a riot or commotion he excited there."

Such was what befell the men of the *London* who served on board the *Kent*, and at this point our story of Solebay closes.

## IX

### WITH PRINCE RUPERT IN THE NORTH SEA

**P**RINCE RUPERT was the Commander-in-Chief in 1673, and fought three battles with the Dutch. In all three the *London* bore her part, as flagship of Vice-Admiral Sir John Harman, at the head of the van division of the Red Squadron, Prince Rupert's own personal charge.

The Duke of York was to have been the Commander-in-Chief, as in the previous year, but since then certain things had taken place in England.

The Test Act had come into force, and as a Roman Catholic James had had to surrender all his offices and his naval command. Prince Rupert stepped into his shoes, and at the King's desire took over the duties of General at Sea and Land and Admiral of the Fleet. The Duke of York, however, kept the King's ear in regard to the appointments of flag officers and captains. That made things very awkward for the man who was to lead the fleet against the enemy.

Differences over the selection of the officers became acute at the outset.

Prince Rupert was specially desirous of having as his second in command his friend and *protégé*, a clever and dashing officer, Admiral Sir Robert Holmes—"Holmes the Achates of the Generals' Fight," as Dryden calls him ;

Holmes whose name shall live in epic song  
While music numbers, or while verse has feet.

He was a first-rate seaman and one on whose proved ability and resourcefulness Rupert could with confidence rely. Instead, the Duke of York's favourite—an able and daring enough flag-officer certainly—Sir Edward Spragge (who was in the *London* at Solebay) was specially appointed. It was an excellent choice in many ways, but unfortunately Rupert and Spragge did not see eye to eye in Court politics, and their personal relations were very far from cordial. The third in command was Sir John Harman, whose flag flew at the masthead of the *London*. He again was another of the Duke of York's friends and nominees. A clever and hard-fighting officer, a "tarpaulin captain," one of Blake's captains originally, and later distinguished as the

Harman who did the twice fir'd Harry save  
And in his burning ship undaunted fought

—the Sir John Harman who had been the Duke's flag-captain in the Lowestoft battle of 1665 ; hardly a better man, it might be, could have been found for the post—but again Harman's appointment was made without consulting Prince Rupert.

In like manner there was friction in regard to certain other officers. "The captains," says that



interesting gossip Bishop Burnet—displaying bias and exaggeration in the statement—“were the Duke’s creatures, so they crossed him (Rupert) in all he did, and complained of all he did.”

Prince Rupert was also gravely handicapped—the state of affairs was, indeed, worse at the outset of the campaign of 1673 than ever before—over the manning of the fleet. The lack of trained seamen on board the ships of the fleet told more heavily against England in this campaign, probably, than in any other of the period.

Also, as came to light after the fleet were facing the enemy, there was the most scandalous mismanagement over the fitting out of the ships: equipment of all kinds was found wanting; stores were defective; there was actually not sufficient powder and shot even to supply all the fleet, and several of the ships put to sea with their magazines half empty.

The campaign opened at the end of April, while the *London* and most of the big ships were still fitting out at Chatham and waiting for men, with an alarm that a large Dutch squadron was making for the Thames. They had with them, it was stated, hulks laden with stones, which they proposed to sink in order to block the channels leading seaward. That was really the case. The Dutch had learned of the backward state of the English fleet, and had arranged to take advantage of it and block them in port. A

second attack on the ships still in the Medway, like that carried out with such disastrous effects to the *Loyall London* six years before, was also in contemplation.

Prince Rupert was at the Nore when the alarm came. He had been there for some time, since early in April, personally hastening on the general preparations. He acted promptly. A number of third and fourth rates had already anchored at the Nore. These Rupert hurried off to sea to attack the Dutch squadron, which was already on the coast of Essex, off the Gunfleet shoal. Rupert's promptitude saved the situation. The Dutch drew off as our ships approached and recrossed the North Sea to rejoin De Ruyter and their own main fleet, then lying at the anchorage of Schooneveldt, off the entrance to the Scheldt.

The *London* and the bigger English ships were then as fast as possible moved down to the Nore, where the whole fleet assembled without further delay. They set sail in the second week of May, and turned westward to join their French allies in the Channel. Having joined the French, on their way back into the North Sea they anchored off Rye, where on the 17th of May King Charles and the Duke of York both came down and inspected the combined fleet. Externally, no doubt, all made an excellent show: 62 English men-of-war and 24 fireships; 29 French men-of-war and 18 fireships. The Comte d'Estrées, a high-born admiral of the Versailles type, was in command of the French,

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under Prince Rupert's orders as "Generalissimo." The French leader, however, had private instructions as to the part he was to play, signed by King Louis's own hand.

The English and French ships were to be intermixed in the line of battle throughout the squadrons of the fleet; as an experiment for that cruise. The plan of keeping the French ships by themselves as the White Squadron, adopted in the previous year and tried at Solebay, had proved by no means satisfactory.

Away to the north, meanwhile, hard by the Banks of Flanders, De Ruyter was grimly awaiting events. He had at hand sixty-four ships of the line and frigates, all told, and twenty-seven fireships, with which to meet the Anglo-French onset.

According to the plan of campaign drawn up at Whitehall, Rupert had a large force of soldiers on board the fleet—upwards of six thousand. He was to bring De Ruyter to battle at once, or if the Dutch commander refused action, in face of the numerical odds against him, he was to blockade him in the Scheldt. Then the troops with the fleet were to be landed on the coast of Holland. Seven to eight thousand more soldiers, with cavalry and guns, would at once follow from England and reinforce the invaders. The troops first sent out—among whom were twelve companies of the King's Guards, half a dozen companies of Coldstreamers, besides the Admiral's Regiment and the Buffs, would help in the preliminary battle, it was suggested, to make up for

the shortage of seamen at the guns. The scheme was a poor compliment to De Ruyter.

The combined fleet passed the Straits of Dover on the 22nd of May. They sighted the Dutch, still riding at anchor behind the sandbanks at Schooneveldt, on the 25th. The Dutch vice-admiral—the *Loyall London's* foe in the St. James's Day Fight, Cornelis Tromp—was giving a dinner-party to De Ruyter and some of the captains on board his flagship at the moment that the approach of the enemy was reported.

Bad weather came on during the next two days and prevented the fleets nearing until the morning of the 28th—the anniversary of the battle of Solebay. In Prince Rupert's fleet everybody was in good temper now. With the enemy in sight, sulks and partisanship were, for the time at least, laid aside. All were Englishmen standing shoulder to shoulder.

. . . They sure fought well  
Whom Rupert led and who were British born.

De Ruyter remained with anchors down. He was waiting for Prince Rupert to attack him, as everybody said on board the English fleet. They would have to "draw the badger," somebody said, have to turn the old dog-fox out of cover.

The lie of the shoals made a direct attack with the big ships practically impossible.

Prince Rupert planned the "drawing" attack; taking advantage of the south-westerly wind, which made it feasible to run close up to the Dutch anchor-



age and back again. Making up a squadron of light-draft ships, thirty of them English and five French, taken from the Red, White, and Blue squadrons indiscriminately, he sent them in at the Dutch to "worry" De Ruyter, and, as the Prince hoped, to entice him to follow them out into deep water, where the Allied Fleet would fall on him in force. It was charmingly simple, but a dangerous game to play with a grim veteran of the Dutch admiral's stamp.

The gallant thirty-five set sail with the gaiety of schoolboys. The Dutch ships, as far as could be made out from the English fleet, were all lying quietly with anchors down, just as they had been doing all along from the first. So the dashing thirty-five went ahead like gay sportsmen starting off for a sure find, the main body of the fleet looking on to see the fun.

De Ruyter, we are told, was watching them all the time—"with a curious smile on his face." Every Dutch ship during the morning had shortened in cable until the anchors only just held. Then the English came up and began to shoot off their guns. The next moment all the Dutch anchors were swinging at the bows and the entire Dutch fleet was turning with heads outwards and swiftly hoisting all sail.

The valiant thirty-five were in a tight place :

. . . Like boys who unaware,  
Ranging the woods to start a hare,  
Come to the mouth of the dark lair  
Where growling low, a fierce old bear  
Lies amidst bones and blood.

One and all they turned back and fled for their lives in wild confusion, De Ruyter's fastest ships coming after them in close pursuit. They raced back to where the combined fleet was waiting further out, itself no less surprised at the sudden change in the situation. Amazed at the unexpected turn of affairs, Rupert hurriedly weighed anchor and moved off seaward, trying to form line as he went. It was done, owing to the confusion, badly.

The coming in of the light squadron caused further disorder. They all came up pell-mell, with the Dutch van ships close astern of them, and ran in anywhere for shelter, mixing themselves up, regardless of their proper squadrons, and making for the ships that happened to be nearest. More than that; they prevented the rest of the fleet opening fire on De Ruyter as he came on in pursuit. They entirely masked Rupert's fire. With them between him and the enemy he dared not open fire lest friends should be hit.

Rupert's difficulties in getting his line of battle into shape gave De Ruyter an opportunity at the outset. He did not miss it.

At the head of the Allied Fleet, to northward, was posted Comte d'Estrées with his French ships, the White Squadron. In the centre was the Prince with the Red Squadron, led by Harman in the *London*, heading the van division of the Reds. In the rear was Spragge and the Blue Squadron.

The impetuous Cornelis Tromp, at the head of the Amsterdam Squadron, led the Dutch advance. As

he came down, driving before him the luckless squadron that had tried to "draw" De Ruyter, Tromp summoned his crew to prayers. After that he addressed them in a short speech brimful of vigorous patriotism, in reply to which "the seamen testified an inexpressible joy, throwing their caps up into the air and crying out, 'Long live Tromp!'"

The fugitives cleared out of the way as they ran in among their friends, and at once Tromp headed to drive home his attack by breaking through between the rear of the White Squadron and the van division of the Red—just where the *London* had her place in the line.

The Dutch onset was very dashing; but the English resistance proved more stubborn than Tromp anticipated. The *London* and the ships she led faced Tromp in a way that astonished him. Turning on their assailants, so fiercely pressed was Harman's vigorous counter-attack at one time that it looked like going hard with Tromp and his ships. De Ruyter himself had to intervene, disengaging from his own fight with Prince Rupert in the centre, and bearing in to extricate his second in command.

Relief was sorely needed, and its approach was announced to his men by Tromp himself: "Courage, my lads," he shouted, "see! There comes the best of our friends to help us!" Tromp, as he also related in his official report after the battle, had to shift out of his flagship four times; each time leaving his last ship disabled. De Haan, Tromp's

rear-admiral, had to change his flagship three times.

Elsewhere, Prince Rupert with the centre and rear divisions of the Red Squadron was in action with De Ruyter for the greater part of six hours, but at less close quarters than Harman fought at, according to the English accounts.

Towards the rear of the line the shrewd and skilful Bankert, De Ruyter's third-squadron leader, for a time scored heavily at the expense of Sir Edward Spragge, owing to that officer's too headstrong valour. Bankert, knowing the man he had to deal with, tried a ruse. He passed word that a number of his ships should seem to give way while under fire. Several of Spragge's ships at once broke away and made after them impetuously. Then Bankert closed up and got them as it were into chancery. They fought their way back again, but were heavily smitten before they could re-form and recover their order.

One Dutch ship, the *Jupiter*, was taken and retaken. Another was so badly mauled that she sank that very night, carrying down her captain and most of her crew. Two French men-of-war were sent to the bottom. None of the English ships were lost, except one of the fireships, "expended" in the pursuance of its duty. Throughout the battle the short supplies of ammunition on board several of the English ships told against us. The Dutch, an officer said, "fired three to one of ours." And, of course, the Dutch were at an advantage from their local knowledge of the waters in which they were



fighting. "Our great care," wrote one of the English captains, "was to keepe cleare of the sands in that narrow hole."<sup>1</sup>

The losses on the English side, as it would appear, were due, in no small degree, to the crowded state of the ships, which were packed on the upper decks with the unfortunate soldiers, among whom the Dutch cannon-balls worked cruel havoc. Three English men-of-war captains fell in the battle, and four of the French captains. De Ruyter, it came out afterwards, suffered the loss of one vice-admiral, one rear-admiral, and two captains.

The battle ended indecisively, and at nightfall

<sup>1</sup> "We with our Red Squadron," says the captain of a ship that fought close to the *London*, "steered away E. by N. in the van towards the north end of the enemy's fleet, which was Trump's squadron. Neere one o'clock our headmost ships came within shot of the enemy and then we all haled away N.E., fighting with our larboard tackes aboard, till neere 3 o'clock. Then being neere Trump's Vice-Admirall I made my signe for a fireship to clap him aboard, but a man-of-warre of 50 gunns coming up between, he grapled with him, but sunke by his side; whereupon I immediately sent my boates with men and tooke the man-of-warre. Then we fought with our starboard tackes aboard till 6 o'clock in the evening and then tacked againe . . . till 8, and then tacked again . . . till ten, still fighting the enemy. Then being dark we left off fighting."

This is a note of the battle as written down by Prince Rupert's flag-captain: "We set on them in the Schoonveldt, wind W.N.W. (but towards evening to N.N.E.), during the fight. We buoyed the outward banks with smacks and ketches and had a smart brush from 12 noon as long as daylight lasted. We did not see damage done to the Dutch, though several of their ships were disabled and forced to leeward. Under 500 killed in our fleet: about 20 in the *Royal Charles*." One of the English fireships, records Captain Haddock also, daringly ran "to within a length of De Ruyter," when the bold attempt was stopped—"they shote his masts about his ears." The plucky captain and his crew got back safely and Prince Rupert gave him £100 and special gratuities to his men.

De Ruyter withdrew to his old anchorage at the back of the shoals and sandbanks of the Schooneveldt. Rupert brought-to his fleet about two miles off to the north-west.

There he watched and waited for De Ruyter's next move.

A second battle was fought on the 4th of June. Both fleets remained in presence during the previous week, the Dutch meanwhile receiving supplies of ammunition and stores and fresh men from the shore. De Ruyter then made the first move. At eleven on the morning of the 4th of June he was seen to be weighing anchor, and in a short while his ships had begun to head out towards where Rupert's ships were still lying at anchor. The Prince was now on board the *Royal Sovereign*, to which ship he had removed three days after the first battle.

The notice given was short. There had been so far next to no signs of movement among the Dutch, although Rupert personally had for the past two nights expressed a good deal of anxiety—the wind favouring a dash out from Schooneveldt—lest a sudden fireship attack might be made in the dark. Prince Rupert was up and on deck, as a fact, all the night of the 3rd of June, and had particularly enjoined on all his captains to keep a very sharp lookout.

De Ruyter came on so fast that many of the ships of the White and Red squadrons had to cut their

cables. It was said after the battle that one reason was because they had not enough hands on board to weigh anchor properly. The Blue Squadron, two admirals of which had gone on board the *Royal Sovereign* during the forenoon to see the Prince and had not had time to get back on board their flagships, was later in moving off than the other two, but at length all three squadrons were under sail. Thereupon the whole fleet stood off to the northwest. The enemy, coming up astern, gradually overhauled them, keeping all the time to windward.

As the Dutch came within long-shot distance, firing opened: a long-range cannonade which lasted, becoming steadily hotter, from three o'clock to five. Then both sides got fairly abreast of one another, squadron facing squadron.

Tromp first opened fire on Sir Edward Spragge and the Blue Squadron. Then De Ruyter himself attacked Prince Rupert and the Red Squadron, among whom, at the head of the leading division, as before, the *London* sailed. Bankert, the Dutch third in command, dealt with d'Estrées and the White Squadron, composed of most of the French ships with some English ships among them.

It was on the Blue Squadron this time that the brunt of the battle fell. The enemy "did never bear down to engage the body of the fleet, but pressed the leading ships, where Spragge and his squadron had like to have been ruined."

Where the *London* fought, De Ruyter made one

fierce attempt to break through the array of the Red Squadron, but the *London* and her consorts foiled the manœuvre and beat the Dutchmen off. In the end De Ruyter ceased firing between nine and ten o'clock and turned away to the south-east. So the second battle ended.

Prince Rupert did not think fit to follow, or to return towards Schooneveldt. He held on his course, shaping his way for the Thames.

This is an account of the battle of the 4th of June from an officer in the Red Squadron, whose journal for the first battle has been quoted.

“The Dutch Fleet set saile and came away large to engage us about one o'clock in the afternoon. Then we immediately set sail with all our fleet till 4 o'clock in the afternoon ; and then Van Trump and his Squadron, leading the van of the Hollands Fleet and Sir Edw. Spragge with his Squadron leading the van of our fleet, Van Trump being about a league upon the weather quarter of Sir Edward Spragge, fires a gun, and Sir Edw. Spragge knowing that our Fleet could no way weather them immediately layes his topsailes aback to stay for Van Trump and his Squadron who were immediately engaged with the other. And De Rutter and all his Squadron bore down upon us and the rest of the Red Squadron, whom we engaged. . . . We engaged with De Rutter and most of his Squadron from 4 in the afternoon till 9 at night, having about 30 men killed and between 60 and 70 desperately wounded,



and all our masts, yards, rigging, and sailes disabled and severall of our gunns and carriages broke and disabled, and likewise all the shot that we had in the ship for the gunns on the two upper decks spent; and being dark we left off the fight."

We get a glimpse also of things on board the *London* in the June battle. It is a personal one of the vice-admiral himself. He was, as has been said, the same John Harman who had fought with Blake against old Martin Tromp and also at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, and as one of King Charles's captains had handled the *Henry* so brilliantly in the Four Days' Fight of 1666. On that occasion Harman's disabled ship was surrounded by a ring of enemies and was hailed to surrender. "It has not come to that!" was the answer, followed by a broadside. Sinking his nearest enemy, the *Henry* fought her way through and rejoined the nearest English squadron. Harman was a martyr to gout—except in battle—hitherto. On one occasion, it is related, when crippled with it, he was told that the enemy were in sight. Harman sprang up briskly, forgot his gout, saw to everything, kept the quarter-deck throughout, won the battle, and then, as the last shot was fired, the gout came on again, and he remained a cripple for the rest of the cruise. On board the *London* now Harman directed his ships of the van division of the Red Squadron seated in an arm-chair on the quarter-deck, with his legs swathed in flannel, "with the cannon balls flying all round him."

The English losses in the battle of the 4th June were said to be about two hundred killed and three hundred wounded. The exact figures were never made public.

They were kept six weeks at the Nore.

Rupert came back furious at the state in which his ships had been sent to sea. The moment that the *Royal Sovereign* let go anchor the Prince sent off a letter of protest to the King.

"The Captains of the best ships come with tears in their eyes," he wrote, "to tell me the few seamen they have on board. When we come to mend our sails we want a needle and thread, when to clap a fish to a mast or yard, spikes and fishes. There are almost no spare topmasts. . . . The truth is, as I foresaw long ago, this fleet was merely huddled out and hitherto maintained by fortune, which I attribute to nothing else but the good luck which attends His Majesty, which I pray may continue."

Some of the Navy Commissioners were sent down to the Nore and waited on Prince Rupert on board the *Royal Sovereign* to deprecate his wrath. He talked to them as though they were culprits in the dock, and finally losing his temper, "beat them with his cane out of the cabin."

Anger, though, however righteous, could not achieve the impossible. The King and the Duke of York came down personally to see to things and to placate the Prince; and the presence of the royal brothers gave a fillip to the dockyard authorities at

Chatham ; but desertions had taken place on an alarming scale, and large numbers of sick had had to be sent ashore. "The true reason," wrote a correspondent to Sir Joseph Williamson, "that the fleet is not at sea is their want of men ; great numbers I am told have been sent up sick, and many have run away while the ships were repairing." Men, more men, still more men, was the continuous cry from the *Royal Sovereign* as Rupert in blank dismay scanned the wretched returns of daily entries sent in from his captains to the flagship every forenoon.

Yet another cause of delay and trouble, which had had a good deal to do with the general sickness in the fleet, was over the victualling. Half the beer put on board for the recent cruise had been "only fit to pour over the side," and the beef and bread had been "short in weight and mostly uneatable." The new supplies were so delayed now, that Rupert, at last, in exasperation wrote to Lord Arlington in London, requesting him to arrest the senior Navy Victualler, Mr. Thomas Papillon, M.P. for Dover, and his colleague, and "hold them fast until they have completed the victualling of the fleet."

While these things were going on, the Dutch were off the Essex coast and at the mouth of the Thames. De Ruyter, with his whole fleet, showed himself off Harwich on the 25th of June. A strong squadron under Tromp's third in command, Rear-Admiral De Haan, before that even ventured into the King's Channel and reconnoitred the ships assembling at

the Nore. Then De Haan's ships, and De Ruyter as well, suddenly disappeared.

The same plan of campaign as before was to be followed by the Allied Fleet; and in pursuance of the scheme seven thousand troops were taken on board on the 13th of July. Those on board during the former cruise had been landed on the return of the fleet.

The French squadron, which had gone to Brest to refit after the June battle, rejoined Rupert at the same time, and on the 17th of July the allied forces once more put to sea. They numbered now: English—62 ships of the line and frigates; French—30 ships of the line and frigates; making a total of 92 men-of-war, together with, in addition, 28 fireships and 23 small craft.

On the other side of the North Sea Admiral De Ruyter had also been reinforced. The Dutch fleet now numbered: 75 ships of the line and frigates, together with 22 fireships and 18 small craft.

Three weeks more passed before the battle, the allied fleet hovering meanwhile off the Dutch coast between the Maas and the islands to north of the Texel, and keeping all Holland in a state of feverish alarm. Rupert, however, dared not venture to land the soldiers, because De Ruyter's fleet was on the watch not far off.

Then, to end the anxiety in Holland, orders were sent to the Dutch admiral, early in August, to put to sea and bring Prince Rupert to immediate action.



De Ruyter started at once. Making his way in the face of bad weather, he sighted Rupert on the 10th, and on the morning of the 11th, with the wind in his favour, bore down to attack. This time it was to be no mere exchange of broadsides if De Ruyter could help it. His proposed tactics were masterly.

Prince Rupert's fleet that morning was in the usual sailing order. The White Squadron—for this occasion composed, as at Solebay, entirely of the French contingent by themselves—formed the van. The Red Squadron, Prince Rupert's personal charge, with the *London* again as flagship of the van division, was, as before, in the centre. The Blue Squadron, Sir Edward Spragge's command, was in the rear.

De Ruyter on his side told off Admiral Bankert to hold the French in check, but he was to employ only a part of his squadron. For himself, he proposed, with his own squadron and the rest of Bankert's command, as well as Tromp's whole squadron, to make a concentrated attack in force on the English Red and Blue squadrons. His combination, De Ruyter calculated, would give him, at the critical point, sixty-five ships against sixty-two.

The first shot in the battle of the 11th of August, 1673, was fired at six in the morning.

The Dutch came to close quarters with the squadrons of Prince Rupert and Spragge at the outset. Soon after that Bankert began to play his clever game with the French ships, who on their side stretched ahead and broke away from the Red

Squadron, separating themselves from the rest of the combined fleet. The French got further and further off as the morning advanced. Spragge's and Tromp's squadrons each drew apart from their own main fleets about the same time, and drifted off to leeward, hotly engaged all the time in a fierce close-quarter duel on their own account.

Thus before nine o'clock, with a clear superiority of numbers, De Ruyter was facing Rupert, now isolated, and left to fight single-handed with only the Red Squadron. Owing to additional ships that Bankert had managed to spare him, the Dutch admiral had at that time, altogether, forty-two Dutch ships to thirty-two English, all that were left with Prince Rupert. The *London* and her consorts at the head of the Red Squadron had a terribly hard time of it. On them most of the reinforcing Dutch vessels crowded, and pressed in to force the fighting. At the same time Prince Rupert, in the centre of the Red Squadron, could not spare a ship to assist his van division. He was himself hard put to it all along the line to hold his own.

Between ten and eleven o'clock things suddenly got more serious still, alike for the *London* and for Rupert on board the *Royal Sovereign*. Bankert, with all the remainder of his squadron, suddenly arrived on the scene and joined in the attack.

It came about in this way. The French had played false, under instructions from Versailles, and, as it was said, contrary to the personal inclinations of their admiral and his captains. The French had

withdrawn from the action out of range, and showed no signs of coming back. Bankert realized the new situation in a moment. That *rusé* Dutch veteran, seeing the kind of men he had to deal with, finding himself at the same time to windward of the battle, made up his mind to let the French alone. With dramatic promptness he signalled to all the ships that were with him to follow, and then he headed in straight for the thick of the fighting, where the English Red Squadron appeared to be already in difficulties.

Almost at the same moment, as if to render the position desperate for the *London* and her consorts, the rear division of the Red Squadron got cut off and isolated from the centre and van divisions. That meant that two-thirds of the English Red Squadron, by themselves, had to fight both De Ruyter's and Bankert's squadrons complete and united.

The cutting off of the rear division of Rupert's Red Squadron left some twenty-two English ships to stand up to between thirty and forty Dutch, all fighting under the eye of "the Good Father of the Fleet," the adored De Ruyter, the foremost sea-captain of the age.

There was no flinching among those who faced De Ruyter. For the endurance shown that day by every officer and man on board ship in the remnant of the English line of battle, as it was now left—with the *London* fighting her hardest for life at one end and the old *Sovereign* resisting stoutly at the other—it is

impossible, surely, to say too much. "The battle," says one contemporary account, "appeared like a general war of the elements, or a strife of all the most contrary things in nature. Fire and water, air and earth, light and darkness, seemed to contend for the victory."

Alike on the quarter-deck and at the guns below—

No thought was there of dastard flight ;  
 Linked in the serried phalanx tight,  
 Groom fought like noble, squire like knight,  
 As fearlessly and well.

It was as fine a show of English pluck and doggedness, of downright determination not to be beaten, as any recorded in our annals ; and it is to the credit of the *London's* name that a *London* did her duty there, in the thickest of the fray.

De Ruyter and Bankert found their foes invincible, although they pressed them hard to the last, fighting on without ceasing until past three in the afternoon.

Prince Rupert then stopped the fight for the time being by forcing his way through the two Dutch squadrons and rescuing his cut-off rear division, when it was at the point of being overpowered by other foes.

Next the Prince moved off to rejoin Sir Edward Spragge and the Blue Squadron, who for their part also had been hard put to it all day to hold their own against Tromp's fiery onsets, and were now in difficulties.

While the *London* and the rallied three divisions of the Red Squadron, together once more, made



their way towards Spragge, De Ruyter and Bankert also altered course, in order to join Tromp. The two hostile groups of ships sailed along side by side, keeping within short range, as we are told, but without firing a gun on either side : like two breathless gladiators recovering themselves before the next round. As might well be, ammunition was running short on both sides, and all knew the battle was not quite over yet.

Rupert joined Spragge about four o'clock, after which, De Ruyter having at the same time joined Tromp, the battle recommenced. For another three hours they fought, as furiously as before, but this time on more even terms for the *London* and her consorts. It was not until nearly seven o'clock that the firing on both sides began to slacken, from sheer want of powder and shot on the part of the English.

The Dutch had another reason for ending the fight. Towards seven o'clock the French ships of the White Squadron, after holding aloof, out of range to windward, all day, reappeared on the scene, heading down under all sail as if to force on the final round in the fighting.

As the French came up De Ruyter withdrew. He had done enough—and more than enough—for honour. He had amply fulfilled his duty to Holland. He had fought three drawn battles and left his enemy too severely handled to be capable of a fourth.

There was no more fighting for the *London* or the fleet during the remainder of the war. After return-

ing to the Nore, and being inspected there once more by King Charles, the ships passed up the Medway to dismantle and lie up. It was known that the Dutch fleet was nearly as badly shattered as our own, and was in no position to attempt another Medway raid before peace was signed.<sup>1</sup>

Incidental to the *London's* story we have this.

The battle of the 11th of August proved the last day of his life for the officer who as Vice-Admiral had flown the red flag at the fore on board the *London* at Solebay. Sir Edward Spragge in 1673, as we have seen, was in command of the Blue Squadron of Prince Rupert's fleet. He had to quit his flagship twice while fighting Tromp, and was drowned while passing to a third ship. Bravado apparently drew

<sup>1</sup> A detailed official report on the damaged state of the *London* and her consorts, made after their return to lie up, is in existence. The *Charles*, in addition to a general knocking about, had "her top timbers shot asunder." The *St. Andrew* had "her sides full of shot holes and the head rails smashed." The *Royal Katherine* was "cut open along the length of the upper deck and her upper works riddled." "Half the *Henry's* side planking must be renewed for shott"; also "the transoms and counter-timbers in the stern, shot through; and new ports made; the main mast shot through, and shot holes through the great cabin." The *Monmouth's* "upperworks and sides" were "full of shot holes, several clamps shot to pieces, mizen mast shot through, all the ports damaged." The *Resolution* was "full of shot holes; the channel wales shot to pieces;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her side to be repaired; clamps and knees shot through." These are some of the items one lights upon at random in turning over the pages of the return. Every ship engaged, down to the smallest, is referred to in turn. According to the statement, the *London's* damages were these: "Top timbers full of holes;  $\frac{3}{4}$  of her spirketting on the middle gun deck disabled with shott; under the beams of the great cabbinn riddled also with shott; upper deck outboard planking all shott through; 2 Beams in the gun room shott through, and 6 pair standards on the middle deck; 2 Pillars in the hold shott; Decks to be shifted."

the fire of the Dutch on him, with fatal results. "It was the ruin of Spragge in the battle of August, '73," wrote one of his officers, "by taking his flag in the boat, which gave the enemy an opportunity to discover his motion."

This is the story of how Admiral Spragge met his fate.

His first flagship, the *Prince*, had been dismasted, and then his second, the *St. George*, suffered a like fate. He selected the *Royal Charles* for his third ship, and hailed across to the nearest ship—the *Dreadnought*—for a boat, "the *St. George's* boats being all lost before, and stayed a little to take his flag with him, fearing lest he should find the *Royal Charles* unsupplied." The *Dreadnought* sent a boat, in which the admiral and his retinue set off, but the shifting of the flag and its display in the *Dreadnought's* boat had been observed by the Dutch ships near by, and a hail of shot was showered at the boat as it pulled away from the *St. George*, splashing spray all over the party. "His little page begged with tears that the *Dreadnought*, not that little boat, might take them to the *Royal Charles*." The next moment came a smashing blow from a round shot. The boat began to fill at once. With half the men baling for their lives, the rest tried to pull back to the *St. George*, barely a dozen lengths from them; but the boat went down before they could get alongside.

Admiral Spragge, it was said, had never learned to swim. He had often been advised to try, but had

always refused. Now two or three of the men tried to keep him afloat, to hold him up ; but they had to let go before help came, and the admiral sank out of sight. His body was picked up floating on the sea some weeks after the battle. It was brought to England and buried in the north aisle of Westminster Abbey on the 23rd of September. Spragge had made his will when on board the *London* before the battle of Solebay. Its opening line is characteristic. It runs : " Being now ready to engage the enemy . . . etc."

At this point the story of the *London's* share in North Sea campaign of 1673 reaches its close.



## X

### IN "ROTTEN ROW": WHEN CHARLES THE SECOND WAS KING

WITH the close of the third Dutch War came some years of harbour existence for the *London*—a period that stands by itself in the annals of the Royal Navy. Never probably was corruption in the public service more rampant than during the last ten years of Charles the Second's reign, and the *London* was one of the victims.

Certain details that are on record about the *London* give us some insight into the state of affairs. In August, 1675, after the ship had been two years laid up, she figures in an official return as needing to have £2100 spent on her to make her fit for service. We must multiply the sum by five to get the amount in present-day money—£10,000 odd. Little had been done to the *London* by way of repairs since she paid off after her last battle. All the old shot holes are enumerated over again, and note is made of their being still unstopped. Three years later, in May, 1678—nothing having been done to the ship mean-

while it would appear—the sum required for indispensable repairs had just doubled. The amount now wanted was £4200—£20,000. Deterioration from sheer neglect would account for the difference. Next, in an official paper of the year 1680, the *London* is returned as having been "thoroughly repaired" between June, 1679, and May, 1680, at the cost of £3557. In strict fact, nothing whatever had been done to the ship—if, indeed, she was even docked. The money was obtained from the Treasury and pocketed: certain Chatham officials shared it between them. Otherwise it is impossible to account for the next return, in 1685. According to that the *London* was in need of urgent repairs estimated at £7188—or, nowadays, £40,000.

We know from many sources what went on among Navy Board officials and in the dockyards at that time—particularly between 1679 and 1684.

Scandalously bad as things were before 1679, they went to rack and ruin at a headlong pace after that year, when King Charles, for reasons of his own, abruptly dismissed the existing Admiralty Board of sea-officers, and put the charge of the Navy, according to Pepys (himself one of the dismissed officials), "into hands which he knew were wholly ignorant thereof, sporting himself with their ignorance."

Sir Anthony Deane, the Comptroller, one of the few really capable and honest officials in the service, after holding out awhile was forced to resign. His advice, he complained in the written statement

which he drew up in self-defence, had been persistently passed over. His letters to the Admiralty were left unanswered, or else "were pretended to be lost." Superior officials neglected their duty, "giving over the seeing to things to others." What was done in the dockyards was never checked; contracts were entered into without authority; worthless stores were accepted at fancy prices; officials were absent without leave and no one was blamed. Certain high officials drew double salaries, "and had five or six clerks to do the work of two." Pay and provisions were drawn for the various port guardships for non-existent men. Stores and materials were embezzled or "misconverted." Repairs were left unexecuted, although the money for them had been paid out. This would answer exactly for the case of the *London*. No provision of timber for repairs or rebuilding was being made; supplies of every kind in the storehouses and magazines were allowed to be pilfered and to dwindle until the dockyard storehouses were literally empty. More serious still, confidential documents of national importance were constantly disappearing from the Navy Board Office, and it was impossible even to get inquiries instituted. The whole of the confidential plans and calculations and details, wrote Sir Anthony, for the thirty large ships ordered by Parliament in 1676 had been stolen and sold to the Minister of Marine in Paris.

Pepys, writing after the new Admiralty Board had been some time in office, talks of their "general

habitual supineness, wastefulness, and neglect of order." He went to Woolwich, he said, and saw a "great emptiness as to all out-stores; several hundreds of workmen standing still every day therein without any other service done by them than coming to their daily calls, for want of materials to employ them on."

For the upkeep of the Navy meanwhile the Admiralty was receiving £400,000 a year (two millions nowadays); a sum set aside out of the Crown revenues as sufficient to maintain the fleet in Ordinary in a state of efficiency in time of peace. What became of the money between 1679 and 1684 was never known. The Admiralty during that period, it afterwards came out, kept no accounts, nor were their papers even filed. Two millions sterling simply disappeared, with nothing whatever to show for it. At the same time a further sum of £80,000 (nowadays equal to £400,000) was found in 1684 to have been added to the Standing Debt of the Navy.

When faced in the end with the fact that the English Navy was actually rotting out of existence, King Charles in the last year of his life had to appoint a Commission of Inquiry. Pepys, as the new Secretary to the Admiralty, took on himself to inquire into the condition of some of the ships. He personally inspected those at Chatham—among them, in her turn, the *London*. The ships, he found, had not been docked once during the past five years, although money had been annually paid out for docking them, as listed in the Admiralty statements



periodically submitted to the King. The caulking in several ships, reported Pepys, had entirely worn away between the planking on the ship's sides, letting water into the hold through the shrunken seams and rotting the frame timbers so that several of them "lye in danger of sinking at their very moorings." Describing the ships in Ordinary at Chatham, as he rowed past them, even their exterior appearance, said Pepys, "was rendered worse than had been usually seen upon the coming in of a fleet after a battle." The planking of some of the ships was "becoming ready to drop into the water, as being (with their neighbouring timbers) perish'd to powder."<sup>1</sup>

Repairs, represented in the dockyard books as having been executed efficiently at considerable expense, Pepys found to have been done by just patching over the defective parts with thin deal and painted canvas; "shot boards nail'd and plaisters of canvas pitched thereon for hiding their defects and keeping them above water."

Important fittings on board several ships were missing, and no trace of them was discoverable. Even the gratings over the hatchways and the portropes to open the ports were missing in some ships. Yet the surveyor of stores at Chatham had drawn

<sup>1</sup> The *Restoration*, a third-rate built in 1678 and never commissioned, was reported in January, 1682, as requiring to have spent on her £420 for repairs. In November, 1685, the Portsmouth authorities made a demand for £2969 to repair her, equivalent to 25 per cent of her cost to build, and to practically £15,000 of our money—entirely the result of dishonesty and sheer neglect.

his expenses for inspecting every ship in Ordinary quarterly.

Holds were found never to have been cleaned out, or even aired. "I have," said Pepys, relating one of his experiences among the ships at Chatham, possibly on board the *London*, "with my own hands gathered toadstools growing in the most considerable of them, as big as my fist."

From these disclosures, and others that Pepys made note of at Chatham, no less discreditable to all concerned, we may get some idea of how things fared with the *London* during this period.

It took upwards of three years of hard and continuous work, and cost nearly five millions of money, simply to make good the damage done by neglect and dishonesty, refill the storehouses, and reorganize the dockyards. The work was vigorously carried on under James the Second, who, whatever his shortcomings as a constitutional Sovereign may have been, was at least an honest and a capable naval administrator.

Then came the Revolution of 1688 and the abdication and flight of King James, after which war with France broke out, and a fresh chapter in the *London's* story opens.

## XI

### IN THE HOUR OF TRIUMPH: AT BARFLEUR AND LA HOGUE

**N**OW we come to the *London's* share in the campaign and battle of Barfleur—La Hogue—at her fifth battle, the great fleet action at sea off Cape Barfleur and its consummation by the boats of the English fleet in the Bay of La Hogue.

On the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-two,  
Did the English fight the French—woe to France!

The story of how the battle came about is, on its own account, as interesting as any in our annals.

In the middle of April, 1692,<sup>1</sup> definite information regarding the French plans for that year reached Whitehall. Up to then there had been rumours of

<sup>1</sup> It was the *London's* second year at sea for that war. In 1691, the year after the defeat at Beachy Head, at which the *London* was not present, the *London* had been the flagship of a famous admiral, Sir Cloudesley Shovell, and had taken part, at the head of the "Advanced Squadron" of the "Main Fleet," as the people of those times called the Channel Fleet, in the historic deep-sea cruise which was the great naval event of the year, the celebrated "Campagne du Large," as the enemy called it, and as it is remembered in the French Navy to this day. On the return of the Main Fleet to port in September, the *London*, with others of her consorts, had a narrow escape from shipwreck. They had been patrolling the sea between the Scilly Isles and Ushant when the weather became so bad

unusual activity at the French dockyards and in various seaports, and also of the massing of Sarsfield's Irish soldiers in Normandy, but at the outset little importance was attached to that. The rumours were thought to point rather to precautionary measures on the part of France, in anticipation of a descent on the French coast which King William, after the close of the last year's campaign, had spoken of in his Speech from the Throne as likely to be the great English effort for 1692. "From France we hear," said a London news-letter of the 5th of April, "that the inhabitants of Picardy and Normandy are much alarmed at the intended descent and are setting up beacons in divers places."

that the Council of War decided on an immediate return home. Course was laid for Plymouth, the fleet driving up Channel under storm canvas, before a heavy gale. Off the Lizard a thick sea fog came on, blanketing out the ships from one another. It brought about a series of disasters. In the early hours of the 3rd of September the *Coronation*, a second-rate, a ship of ninety guns, one of the leading vessels, ran blindly on the reefs off Rame Head as she was turning in for Plymouth Sound. She was lost with all on board—over four hundred officers and men. The *Harwich*, a seventy-gun third-rate, scraped round into the Sound and then wrecked herself on a ledge of rocks outside Cawsand Bay. The *Northumberland* and the *Royal Oak* both got badly aground, but were salvaged later. The *London*, with the body of the Main Fleet, following a little further off-shore, all but ran on the Eddystone. They had a very narrow escape indeed. They were groping their way up Channel in the fog, running before the storm with apparently good sea room, when, towards ten o'clock on the morning of the 3rd, a partial thinning of the wall of mist ahead for a moment suddenly showed them the surf beating on the reefs of the Eddystone. There was no lighthouse there as yet. The rocks were exactly ahead of them and less than a mile off. Thanks to the momentary gleam all were able to work clear, although some of the leading ships had to pass dangerously close. During the forenoon the storm began to abate, and by night-fall the fleet were in security, at anchor in Plymouth Sound.



"King James is expected to accompany the King of France to Flanders," said another news-letter. The first inkling of what was really going forward in France first reached the public in this country some ten days after that. "French newspapers and letters . . . give out that they will make a descent upon us, but this all sensible men look upon as a grimace to amuse their people and to answer the report of our intending to make a descent upon them." It was just lifting a corner of the curtain for people in general. On the very same day the Government learnt that the situation was fraught with very grave peril indeed.

While the news-writer was penning the item about King James for his country budget, couriers at Whitehall were saddling up to start round the shires to the lords-lieutenant with orders to "have the militia ready to muster." Admiral Russell that same evening was summoned to the Admiralty. Says Narcissus Luttrell in his *Diary*: "Sunday, 10th April.—Admiral Russell with the other flag officers took sacrament at St. Martin's Church." On Monday morning Russell, as Commander-in-Chief of the "Main Fleet," issued a general order for every naval officer on leave at home to report himself on board ship within a fortnight. "All the Seamen of the Nation" were summoned by proclamation in the *London Gazette* "to offer themselves to be in-listed, with threats of punishment if they do not," and peremptory orders were sent to the local authorities in inland places to impress "such seamen and sus-



ADMIRAL EDWARD RUSSELL, EARL OF ORFORD, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF AT BARFLEUR  
 —LA HOGUE, 1692  
*After Bockman's portrait at Greenwich Hospital*



pected seamen as lurk there." Admiral Russell then went down to the fleet now assembling at the Nore, and two light squadrons, under Rear-Admirals Mees and Carter, were despatched to patrol off the French coast between Dunkirk and St. Malo. On the 19th of April a French privateer was wrecked on the Goodwins, and the crew, on being taken off by a man-of-war from the Downs, were found to have among them certain Englishmen in the pay of King James, who had come from Brest as spies to report on the fleet at the Nore.

The gravity of the situation now for the first time burst upon the public at large. On the 20th of April the news came to hand that the French were ready to throw a strong force of troops into the Channel Islands, and after that a descent on the coast of Scotland was to be attempted. King Louis, it was reported, had placed a large sum of money at James's disposal, at the same time appointing him to the supreme command of all the French forces massed in Normandy, with Marshal Bellefonds as his chief of the staff. At once four regiments of foot were ordered off to strengthen the garrison of the Channel Islands, and other troops, which had been preparing to embark as reinforcements for King William in Flanders, were ordered to stand fast.

Then still more serious news came. It was not Scotland that was in danger. It was London. The South of England was to be the real objective of the French army. Another ten days, the positive statement was made, would probably see them landed.



Confirmation of the French invasion scheme, and important details in regard to its execution, were found on board the privateer wrecked on the Goodwins, in the letters intended for James's agents in London. On the top of this intelligence came a definite statement that there were sixteen thousand soldiers under canvas at Havre, and as many at La Hogue, all ready to go on board ship for England. Reports forwarded secretly from Brest told how transports there were getting ready to leave, and that the French main fleet had taken on board forty field-pieces, a quantity of cases of small arms, and a number of flat-bottomed boats for disembarking troops on the beach.

The French plans had been most carefully laid, and they had been three months at work on them before the significance of the preparations was understood across the Channel. Ever since January, when the ex-King James personally laid the invasion project before Louis at Versailles, the French War Office and Ministry of Marine had been hard at work. Had it not been, indeed, for unforeseen delay at the last minute, the attempt would have been made in the third week in April.

The plan of campaign was James's own. He proposed to invade England at the head of nearly thirty thousand troops, the backbone of which would be his old Irish regiments, brought over to France at the close of 1691 under the convention of Limerick. At the head of these James proposed to land near Deal and march on Chatham and Rochester. There

he hoped, to use his own words, to get possession of "the wives, children, and houses of a great number of the officers and sailors of the fleet, which will hinder them from acting against me." Thus he would become "master of the English fleet, because when they know that I have in my hands all that is most dear to them they will not fight against my interest." From Chatham, London would be easily taken; and its capture, reasoned James, with the interests there of the nobility, merchants, and men of position, would ensure their siding with him, after which the rest of England would follow. The descent was to be made in the early spring, when William and the English army would be held fast in Flanders by Marshal Luxembourg, whose troops would be taking the field from their winter quarters.

The all-important preliminary was for the French fleet to be at sea before the English and Dutch fleets had joined company for the spring cruise. As to that, however, James's agents in England assured the ex-King that the English fleet could not possibly be ready before May or June, while the Dutch never put to sea before the end of May. In any case, declared James's agents, Admiral Russell would never oppose the passage across the Channel of the army that was to reinstate the Royal House of Stuart.

To ensure success at sea, directions were issued from Versailles for the whole naval strength of France to be employed. Explicit orders were sent

out that the Brest fleet, and the Rochefort and Toulon fleets, seventy-five sail of the line in all, were to concentrate in the Channel by the middle of April. The three hundred transports were to be ready by then, and all assembled at Havre and in La Hogue Bay. Every detail was completely worked out on paper and discussed at Versailles, at a series of interviews between Louis XIV himself, Admiral Tourville, and M. de Pontchartrain, the Minister of Marine.

The army of invasion, for its part, was ready before the appointed time. James, with Bellefonds and the Duke of Berwick, was at Caen in the first week of April. The Irish soldiers in the camp at St. Vaast, we are told, had already begun to discuss the coming sack of London. All were in high spirits and assured of victory. "How happy shall I be," wrote one French colonel, "when I date my first letter from on board ship. The next will follow dated from the English shore ; the third, please God, from London."

But the French fleet was not ready. The arrangements of the Ministry of Marine were behind-hand, and mishaps and bad weather added to the delay. The French dockyards had proved unequal to the strain on their resources. At Brest stormy weather seriously damaged several ships, while strong westerly gales kept the transports collected there from leaving for their destinations. The Comte d'Estrées, with the Toulon fleet, also, baffled by head winds, had been unable to pass

the Straits of Gibraltar. So the month of April went by.

In England, on the other hand, if the awakening was late, the time lost was more than made up for by the energy that was displayed everywhere.

In preparation for the proposed descent on the French coast—first suggested when Admiral Russell was off Ushant in the previous July, referred to by King William in Parliament in September, and definitely planned in December, 1691—the English fleet had been made ready for sea unusually early that year. As it happened, also, half the Dutch contingent had joined it before the middle of April. The unexpected state of forwardness for sea of the English fleet and their allies foiled at the outset the French scheme of a surprise invasion.

Practically the whole of the English fleet was at anchor in the Downs, and had completed its preparations for sea during the first ten days of May, the Admiralty sparing no efforts to ensure that the ships joined well manned and efficiently equipped. The Admiralty Lords, and Russell with them, had had a special audience of Queen Mary at Whitehall on the 29th of April, after which the Board held an Extraordinary Sitting. As a result orders were sent out broadcast to place an embargo on all shipping in all ports of the kingdom, and withdrawing all "protections" from the pressgang that might previously have been issued. Even skippers and mates of coasters and trading ships were declared liable to pressing in common with "all fit



seamen, watermen, etc.”<sup>1</sup> Then Russell posted down to Deal and joined the fleet.

Routine work, the drawing up of his line of battle and equalizing the crews of the various ships, which led to bitter complaints from aggrieved captains who had already got together ships’ companies that they were pleased with, occupied his time fully. Another trouble was to keep the men on board—always a source of anxiety when they were in the Downs. While the fleet was at anchor a large number of desertions took place among the pressed men, who were being seduced from the King’s service by large bribes to desert, offered them by merchants and others who wanted their own trading ships manned for the ensuing season. Letters, it was discovered, were being smuggled on board many of the ships from people on shore, offering tempting inducements to the seamen to slip away and enter on board the merchants’ ships, and also

<sup>1</sup> On land, in England, meanwhile, the military were working their hardest day after day. Camps were formed between Petersfield and Southampton, at which all the regulars left in the country were ordered to assemble. Four regiments were recalled from the army in Flanders to join the troops at Southampton; six regiments were brought over from Ireland, and three were marched all the way from Scotland; with ten regiments of horse and dragoons, and an artillery train of thirty-two pieces, made up of all the guns available at the Tower and in St. James’s Park. The militia of the seaboard counties were called out, and those of Kent, Surrey, and Sussex ordered to march forthwith to the coast. The London Trained Bands and the Militia of Westminster and Middlesex were placed under arms as the garrison of the capital, and mounted guard day and night. On the 7th of May the Queen in Council issued orders to the lords-lieutenant of the southern and western counties to have all horses and cattle driven ten miles inland, and all corn on the farms carted inland to the same distance.

informing them of various means that had been devised to get them ashore undetected. "The fighting part," wrote Russell bitterly to the Admiralty, "is by much the least that an Admiral of the English fleet meets with."

The news from France continued to grow steadily more and more disquieting. Tourville and the Brest fleet, it was reported, had sailed to meet the Toulon fleet off the entrance of the Channel and had been sighted off the Land's End. Siege-guns and scaling-ladders, it was further reported, were being shipped on board the last of the transports at Brest. The greater number of the other transports had by now arrived in the Bay of La Hogue, on the shores of which King James held a grand review of five thousand horse, MacMahon's and Tyrconnell's dragoons, and twenty thousand infantry, including the Royal Irish Guards, all fully equipped and in marching order.

On the 12th of May Delavall and Carter's squadrons, which had been cruising off the French coast, came in and joined Russell. On the 13th the fleet weighed anchor for St. Helen's, being followed round and joined there by the last contingent of Dutch ships. Russell reported the total force under his orders on the 15th of May as seventy-nine sail in all; twenty-two of them belonging to the Dutch squadron.

At that moment the situation took a fresh turn.

Even more disturbing intelligence had just reached England. The French, it was said, were now talk-

ing openly that their fleet would be able to make its way across the Channel regardless of anything that the British Navy might attempt against it. As for Admiral Russell's fleet, said the French, if the English ships, after what had happened at Beachy Head, should really meet them at sea, Russell's men would prove shy of trying to stop them. They went further. They asserted that they had assurances that, if the English captains did not actually declare openly against King William, on the two fleets meeting, they would at least show sympathy with the French captains on behalf of the restoration of King James by not taking overt measures to bar their passage. James himself, too, was reported to have said so. His very words soon found their way to London. He had said in addition, people told one another, that he personally had had positive assurance that this was what Russell's fleet intended to do. As Duke of York, everybody knew, James had been Lord High Admiral of England. He had twice commanded the English fleet in battle, and on each occasion victoriously ; and furthermore, he had always shown warm interest in the sea service, to improve which, as King, during his short three years' reign, he had done all that was possible. He also had, as every one knew, a large number of personal friends among Admiral Russell's captains, some of whom were said to have openly expressed discontent at certain recent doings of the Government. Admiral Russell himself, most people were aware, had owed his first steps in the Navy to James ; he

had been a lieutenant in James's flagship, and a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to him as well, when Duke of York.

All this, together with stories of what was being said in the camp at St. Vaast, with various exaggerations, arriving on this side of the Channel at that moment, sent a fit of cold shivers through the nation.

Thereupon sinister rumours got about that disloyalty was rampant in the Navy. What if, after all, the fleet was really not to be trusted? Did Admiral Russell and his captains mean to play false to the Government to which they had sworn allegiance, from whose Treasury they drew their pay? That suddenly became the question of the hour all over the kingdom.

At that juncture the existence of a widely reaching Jacobite plot suddenly became known. It involved the names of personages of very high rank and half the leading politicians in Parliament.

There was evidently something very grave on foot. Arrests of prominent men were reported every day; Government agents were making domiciliary visits all over London; active inquiries were being prosecuted for certain well-known political leaders who had gone into hiding. All London knew that the Palace guards were doubled, and that mounted sentries were on duty before the approaches to Whitehall. Parliament was summoned to meet at once.

In the midst of the general alarm extreme misgivings were openly expressed about the Navy and



its officers. The wildest rumours flew about as to the part that the fleet was designed to play in the plot.

Ugly stories were told at every street corner in London of what the tattlers "knew for certain" this or that officer meant to do when the fleet met the French. In London, says Lord Macaulay, "at all the coffee-houses Admirals and Captains were mentioned by name as traitors who ought to be instantly cashiered, if not shot. It was even confidently affirmed that some of the guilty had been put under arrest and others turned out of the Service." Admiral Russell, as many did not hesitate to declare, was in secret correspondence with St. Germain, and was pledged to deliver over the fleet to James at a moment that had already been agreed on. Admiral Carter was a declared Jacobite, and had sworn, come what might, to carry his squadron over without firing a shot. A similar charge was made against the third in command of the fleet, Vice-Admiral Delavall. Other unpleasant suggestions were whispered against Russell's second in command, Admiral Sir John Ashby, and so on, practically throughout the list of both flag-officers and captains.

What these tales were based on is not our concern here. Possibly there had been some indiscreet remarks in private. At any rate, the outcome was momentous. The tittle-tattle of the London gossips, in the result, proved of very real service to the State. It reached the ears of Queen Mary and her Council, and led them to do just the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way.

How they dealt with the situation is familiar history.

“On the 15th of May,” in the words of Lord Macaulay, “a great assembly of officers was convoked at St. Helen’s on board of the *Britannia*, on which Russell’s flag was flying. The Admiral told them that he had received a despatch which he was charged to read to them. It was from Nottingham. ‘The Queen,’ the Secretary wrote, ‘had been informed that stories deeply affecting the character of the Navy were in circulation. It had been affirmed that she had found herself under the necessity of dismissing many officers. But Her Majesty was determined to believe nothing against those brave servants of the State. The gentlemen who had been so foully slandered might be assured that she placed entire reliance in them.’ The letter was admirably calculated to work on those to whom it was addressed. Very few of them probably had been guilty of any worse offence than rash and angry talk over their wine. They were as yet only grumblers. If they had fancied that they were marked men they might in self-defence have become traitors. They became enthusiastically loyal as soon as they were assured that the Queen reposed entire confidence in their loyalty. They eagerly signed an address in which they entreated her to believe that they would, with the utmost resolution and alacrity, venture their lives in defence of her rights, of English freedom, and of the Protestant religion against all foreign and Popish invaders. ‘God,’ they added, ‘preserve

your person, direct your counsels, and prosper your arms, and let all your people say Amen.'"

The "Address of Loyalty," as Russell himself termed it, was signed on board the *Britannia* on the evening of the 15th. Sixty-four signatures were appended, one of the first among them being that of Matthew Aylmer, the captain of the *London*. Admiral Russell sent it off next morning by a courier at full gallop to Secretary Nottingham, desiring him to lay it before the Queen, from the captains at their special request, "with all imaginable assurance of their loyalty and fidelity." Nottingham did so, and returned Her Majesty's gracious reply: "She always had this opinion of the Commanders, but was very glad this had come to satisfy others."

Russell wrote by the same messenger to the Admiralty. He ended his letter with these words: "I wish hourly for an occasion to try our officers, who I hope will answer what is expected from them."

"If your commanders play false," Admiral Russell is related to have said to the crews of the *Britannia* and the *London*, and certain other ships that he visited; "if your commanders play false, overboard with them, and with myself the first!" He had undoubtedly corresponded with his old master, but at the same time he had given ample warning that "as he was an officer and an Englishman, it behoved him to fire upon the first French ship that he met, although he saw James himself upon the quarter-deck."

On the morning of the 15th of May also, a Council of War had been held on board the *Britannia* to decide where they should first look for the enemy. According to the latest intelligence, the French fleet were away to westward, off the Cornish coast ; but the source of this intelligence was not very satisfactory. The Council of War in the end agreed to the following resolutions : "Not to proceed to the westward of St. Helens till there be certain intelligence that the French fleet is on our coast, and then to endeavour to fight them ; to sail with the first fair weather to the French coast near Cape de Hague and Cape Fleur (Barfleur), and continue there four days, if fair, to see what service may be done there, and then return to St. Helens as the place most proper for the fleets' rendezvous ; to come to an anchor on the French coast and ride there one day, if it be fair weather."

Owing to the weather, as it happened, they were unable to leave St. Helens, but in the course of the next three days definite news of the enemy came to hand.

Two copies of the French admiral's latest orders, during those three days, were lying in Admiral Russell's cabin on board the *Britannia*. A week before that, the *Dragon*, cruising off the coast of Normandy, had overhauled a French advice-boat on the search for Tourville with confidential papers from Versailles, which included an urgent despatch countermanding Louis's previous instructions. Those had been, in effect, that he must give battle whenever he



met the English fleet, "en quelque nombre qu'ils soient." The *Dragon* had reached Spithead on the 15th of May, just before the Great Council. A second French advice-boat, *La Volage*, with duplicate orders, "with a pacquett for Monsieur Tourville," had also been taken by the *Centurion*, one of Rear-Admiral Carter's squadron. She had mistaken Carter's ships, then cruising off the Cotentin, for friends. "A vessel came into the Fleet and shew'd French colours, upon which the *Deptford* (which was the nearest ship to her) put out Genoese colours. She made a signal to us which we could not answer, so she stood away under all the sail she could make." The *Centurion* and *Tiger* went after her, and the *Centurion* captured her and brought her to Spithead.

During the afternoon of the 17th, Admiral Russell learned that a spy's message, smuggled across from Cherbourg, had arrived at Whitehall to the effect that King Louis had "sent positive orders for the forces for the invasion to embarque by the 20th instant." At ten next morning, the 18th of May, a courier from the Mayor of Weymouth arrived at Portsmouth, after an arduous and miry ride through the New Forest, with the news that at seven on the morning of the previous day the French fleet had been seen from Portland Bill. They were then some three leagues out at sea and standing up Channel. The courier reached Portsmouth just an hour after Russell had got under sail from St. Helens. A Guernsey privateer, Captain John Tupper, had already given the admiral full and trustworthy in-

telligence of the approach of the French, and Tourville's approximate numbers, some time earlier that morning. He had sailed through the enemy's fleet and got away aided by thick weather. He later received a gold medal and chain as a special reward.

The fleet stood out and headed towards the coast of France, directly across the probable course of the enemy. The wind was light and from the west-south-west. As he cleared the Isle of Wight, Russell detached two fast ships, the *Chester* and the *Charles* galley, with orders to ply to windward and look out for the French. Nothing, however, was seen of the enemy that day, and at nightfall Russell was without further news.

The alarm was given the first thing next morning. Between three and four o'clock the guns of the *Chester* and the *Charles* were heard firing rapidly. A little later the two ships came into the fleet making signals that the enemy were near at hand. The English fleet was by this time well over towards the coast of France ; about seven leagues off Cape Barfleur and somewhat to the north-eastward of that headland.

It was too misty at first for either side to make the other out, but as the sun got up the mist gradually thinned off, and the morning became fairly clear and bright. The French were now seen to be heading to the south, whereupon Russell also headed in that direction, on the starboard tack.

The enemy's intention, as Admiral Russell surmised, was to double the cape and join hands with

the transports with the invading Franco-Irish army on board, lying in the Bay of La Hogue.

"At three this morning," writes an officer, "our Scouts made the signal for discovering the enemy : so the Admiral presently made the signal to draw into a Line of Battle, which we soon did, and made clear Ships. It being foggy, we in the fleet did not see them until seven, when we made them to be about fifty Sail, bearing down upon us in a Line, with a small gale about the West-South-West."

The English line was formed close to the wind, heading in a general direction southwardly. Our Dutch allies formed the White or van squadron. Then came the English Red Squadron, twenty-seven ships of the line, forming the centre. It was under the immediate orders of Russell himself, on board the *Britannia*, with Benbow for the Master of the Fleet. In the rear was the English Blue Squadron, twenty-nine ships, headed by the *Victory*, the flagship of Admiral Sir John Ashby.

The *London* had the post of honour in the Red Squadron as one of the "seconds," or chief supporters, to Admiral Russell's flagship. Her place in the line of battle was next to, and immediately ahead of, the *Britannia*—an interesting conjunction of names at such a time : *London* and *Britannia*. The *St. Andrew*, another powerful ninety-six gun ship, commanded by the Duke of Marlborough's brother, Captain George Churchill, was the *Britannia*'s second astern. So Scotland too was represented at the post of honour.

The *Britannia* and her seconds were all three exceptionally well manned—the best-manned ships in the fleet. There were on board the *Britannia* 940 men, 60 above her normal complement; on board the *London* 780 men, 50 above her complement; on board the *St. Andrew* 730 men, exactly her complement.

This is the armament that the *London* carried at the battle of La Hogue. The old style of names for guns, dating back to Henry the Eighth's time, was still in use in the Navy for the heavier pieces, but a newer method of classification, according to the weight of shot fired, had begun to come in, beginning with the lighter pieces. We find both systems in use on board the *London*. According to an official paper these were her guns:—

|                   |    |    |                           |
|-------------------|----|----|---------------------------|
| On the lower deck | .  | 26 | demi-cannon (32-prs.).    |
| „ „ middle „      | .  | 26 | whole-culverin (18-prs.). |
| „ „ upper „       | .  | 26 | demi-culverin (9-prs.).   |
| „ „ forecastle    | .  | 4  | 6-prs.                    |
| „ „ quarter-deck  | 12 | „  |                           |
| „ „ poop          | .  | 2  | „                         |
| Total             | .  | 96 | guns.                     |

In her magazines the *London* carried ten tons of powder and twenty-five tons of shot: round and double-headed “hammered shot,” double-headed “cast shot,” and bar shot. For the demi-culverins there was also “canister” (tin cases filled with musket bullets). Hand grenades, fused ready, were on the quarter-deck, in case it came to boarding,



with snap-haunce muskets, pikes, loaded bandoliers, hatchets, bills, and hangers. So we gather from a list of the gunner's stores on board.

In command of the *London* was Captain Matthew Aylmer, an Irishman, and an officer of capacity and distinction and wide experience at sea. Ten years of service, cruising for Algerine pirates, had taught him something of seamanship. He had also borne his part in battle against the French as one of the captains on that unfortunate day off Beachy Head. He lived to become an admiral, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean and in the Channel, a Lord of the Admiralty, Governor of Greenwich Hospital, and a peer, Lord Aylmer of Balrath, the first of a still existing line. His portrait hangs in the Painted Hall at Greenwich.

The combined fleet numbered eighty-two ships in all, but when firing opened the Blue Squadron was widely separated from the main body and away to leeward, unable to get into station owing to the extreme lightness of the wind.

"I bore away with my own ship," wrote Russell, describing his movements to the Earl of Nottingham, the Secretary of State, "so far to leeward as I judged each ship in the Fleet might fetch my wake or grain, then brought-to again, lying by with my foretopsail to the mast to give the ships in the Fleet the better opportunity of placing themselves as they had been directed."

While this preliminary was being carried out, slowly—for during the night the fleet had straggled

a good deal—the French were nearing the allies. They came on boldly, forming line rapidly as they advanced, and finally coming to the wind on the same tack as ourselves, just within musket-shot.

The enemy numbered in all fifty ships, against thirty odd, which composed Russell's own squadron, on which by itself the French attack was concentrated at the outset. The Blue Squadron, of twenty-nine sail, was too far to leeward to be of account until late in the afternoon, and the Dutch in the van were becalmed. So, indeed, Russell himself explained in a letter written just after the battle. "The enemy's ships," wrote the admiral, "did not exceed fifty ships of war, of which number eighteen of them had three decks, and but two so small as fifty-six guns. Though their number was inferior to ours, yet I positively affirm that the ships of their Majesties' which beat them did not exceed forty, for, the weather being so thick and quite calm, the Dutch, who led the van, could not come in to fight, and the Blue, who were in the rear, could not come up except in the night, about eight o'clock."

Tourville, as it happened, had put to sea with only the Brest fleet; without waiting for the Rochefort and Toulon squadrons, which were to have joined him at Brest. Had he waited for them, he might have had from seventy to eighty sail of the line under his orders that morning.

There had been delays which the framers of the

plan of operations had not anticipated. The Toulon squadron had been kept back by stormy weather on its way round; it had also two ships wrecked in passing Gibraltar, after which it had been still further delayed by persistent head winds while working up the coast of Spain. Tourville sailed from Brest on the 22nd of April with thirty-seven ships of the line, hoping to pick up his two additional squadrons in the Channel. He was successful in meeting seven of the Rochefort ships, but not the Toulon contingent, which should have been his principal reinforcement. As a fact, at the very moment that Tourville was coming in sight of Russell on the 19th of May, the Toulon squadron was only just arriving at Brest.

The French admiral left Brest with orders to go on to La Hogue Bay as soon as possible, and at once escort the invading troops across. Bad weather and easterly gales, however, forced him twice out of the Channel. He was now—nearly a month after leaving Brest—making a third attempt to return and reach La Hogue. He had not heard from France for a month, and had no idea of how the situation had altered in the interval.

The French—both Tourville himself on board his flagship and the King at Versailles—had been at fault from the beginning as to the readiness for sea and the numbers of the allied fleet. Tourville's orders, signed by the King in Council and drawn up with the French idea of the situation as in the middle of April it was understood to be, left the

admiral practically no option but to give battle. That course had been deliberately chosen by the Court of Versailles in the confident expectation, as has been said, that the Dutch would not yet have joined, and that the Jacobite captains in the English fleet would seize the opportunity to declare themselves. The awakening to the real state of things came while Tourville was at sea and his whereabouts unknown at Versailles. In the middle of May, at the last moment, the French Court learned for certain that they must not count on treason in the English fleet; that the English and Dutch fleets were at sea in full force; that the Toulon ships had not joined, and that in consequence Tourville would have to engage them a full third short of his intended strength. The admiral's original orders were hastily cancelled, and special advice-boats were hurried off carrying him fresh orders. He must now decline fighting and withdraw to Brest. Not one of the advice-boats reached Tourville. Two of them, as we have seen, were captured *en route*.

Tourville himself on the morning of the 19th of May realized his position as soon as he saw the force in front of him. But he could not help himself. He was bound to give battle. The wording of the King's orders made disobedience a very serious matter—a case, it might even be, for the Bastille. His original orders—all he had received—left him practically no discretion. They dated back to the second week in April. His instructions were to engage the enemy whatever their numbers might



be. If successful he was to pursue them to their ports. If unsuccessful he was to save his fleet as best he could. In any event he was to fight with tenacity ("opiniâtre le combat"), so as to cripple the English. Thus, were he even at a disadvantage in open battle, even yet the descent of the troops from La Hogue could be carried out. Such was the tenor of the instructions under which Tourville had now to act.

Tourville knew something else. He was aware that he had private enemies at Versailles who had the King's ear. The Minister of Marine, for one, as Tourville was well aware, was none too well disposed to him. Pontchartrain, indeed, in the previous year had gone so far as to hint that Tourville's conduct in the management of the "Campagne du Large" had been hardly that of a man of courage. Such a thing, whatever happened, must not be said of him again.

As soon as the clearing off of the morning mist enabled the French admiral to make out the great superiority of numbers against him, Tourville summoned his captains on board his flagship the *Soleil Royal*. He read the King's letter of instructions to them, amid a breathless and dramatic silence. All listened, with bent heads and with a display of the utmost deference, as though they were actually in the royal presence. "Those, gentlemen, are His Majesty's orders, which it is our duty to obey," concluded Admiral Tourville, as he folded the document up. "You see the enemy!" The captains



THE PRIDE OF FRANCE:—TOURVILLE'S FLAGSHIP *LE SOLEIL ROYAL*  
*From the painting at Versailles*



rose and saluted gravely, and then left the cabin in silence to go back to their ships—D'Amfreville and De Villette and Gabaret, the squadron leaders, and the rest of the gallant band. As their boats pulled off, the *Soleil Royal* ran up at the masthead the general signal "Prepare for battle!" Such is the tale that is one of the glorious memories of the French navy to this day.

Without any show of preliminary manœuvring, Tourville headed boldly for the centre of the English fleet, completing his line of battle as he went along. He had his flagship steered, according to the etiquette of the age, directly for the *Britannia*, at whose masthead flew conspicuously Russell's flag of chief command. Nearing his antagonist, Tourville came to the wind on the same tack as the English fleet, and then he ranged alongside at less than musket-shot range—from 150 to 200 yards. It was just eleven o'clock.

At the same time, though, while bent apparently on a straightforward attack, the French leader was not remiss in seizing the opportunity that offered itself. In that he acted with a skill worthy of his reputation as the ablest sea-officer of the age. He took at the outset prompt advantage of his opponent's scattered situation. As he stood towards the English to engage, he concentrated his force to attack Russell's centre. He designed to throw his full weight—his combined centre and rear squadrons, together with half of his van ships—bodily on the van and centre divisions of the English Red Squad-



ron by themselves, meanwhile holding in check the Dutch, who led the allied line, with the remaining section of the French van squadron.

Six or seven of the leading ships of the French van squadron stretched ahead under a press of sail and ranged themselves opposite the Dutch squadron, to keep them in play with a more or less distant cannonade. While this was being done, other ships of the French van, edging off a little to windward, prevented the Dutch from working round and weathering on the French main body. Simultaneously Tourville himself, with every other ship that he had available, practically all his fleet except the tail of the French rear, pressed home the attack on the van and centre divisions of the English Red Squadron in close order. The rear division of the Red Squadron, under Sir Cloudesley Shovell, was for the time being, owing to the lightness of the wind, unable to keep touch with, or render aid to, Admiral Russell. To keep Shovell back while he overwhelmed the English centre, Tourville ordered part of the French rear squadron to make a brisk attack on the ships of that group.

The English Blue Squadron at that moment was miles astern, and lying quite becalmed. It could not get into action for some hours, and there was no need to consider it.

Against the centre division of the Red Squadron, where the *Britannia* and the *London* were stationed,

Tourville came down with some fifteen or sixteen ships, mostly big three-deckers, the pick of the French navy, against the nine that constituted Russell's immediate command.

It was a very skilful display of tactics on the part of the French commander. It promised him an enormous tactical advantage, a chance of snatching a victory. There seemed at the beginning more than a possibility that Tourville might be able to overpower his antagonist's isolated centre group by his sudden concentrated attack *en masse*, in conditions where the rest of the British fleet could render their admiral little or no aid. What might not be the outcome, the effect on the fortune of the day?

With such ideas and hopes Tourville began the battle at close quarters.

"About eleven," describes an eyewitness on board one of the English ships, the *Centurion*, "we began to engage. The French Admiral came within point blank of our Admiral, who with his squadron lay-by to receive him. Mr. Russell, as soon as he saw Tourville bring to, gave him three cheers, which was answered by a volley of small shots from Tourville, and was soon returned with a broadside from our admiral. . . . In a trice we were so buried in Fire and Smoke and had such hot service ourselves that we could not see or mind what others did."

"I will do the French that justice," said Sir Cloudesley Shovell after the day was over, "that is

their Admiral and all his Squadron, as to declare that I never saw any come so near before they began to fight in my life."

The brunt of the fighting fell at the outset on the *Britannia*, the *London*, and the *St. Andrew*; on these three ships in particular. They made a defence against heroic odds, worthy of the nation whose ensign they bore. The *Britannia*, *London*, and *St. Andrew* for more than an hour and a half closely engaged the French admiral's flagship, the big three-decker *Soleil Royal*, and five other three-deckers. The ship next ahead of the *London* was a weak fifty-gun ship, the *Greenwich*, a fourth-rate. She did her best, but the little *Greenwich* was unable to stand up to the heavy metal of the French three-deckers, and the *London* had to help her as well as to look after herself and to second the *Britannia*. The corresponding fourth-rate, the *Chatham*, astern of the *St. Andrew*, was beaten out of the line, and a gap made until another ship, Captain John Leake's *Eagle*, pressed forward to fill it.

Endurance told in the end, and the man behind the gun. "The French admiral," so Russell put it, "plied his guns very warmly, though our men fired their guns faster." Better gunnery, then as has ever been the case, decided the issue of the day. "After that time," continued Admiral Russell, "I did not find his guns were fired with that vigour as before, and I could see him in great disorder, his rigging, sails, and topsail-yards being shot, and nobody endeavouring to make them serviceable, and his boats towing

of him to windward, gave me reason to think he was much galled."

After that more French ships arrived on the scene, and the encounter was fought out with redoubled fierceness. "Five ships of the enemy's Blue Squadron came and posted themselves, three ahead of Monsieur Tourville and two astern, and fired with great fury, which continued till after three."

Meanwhile, somewhere about two in the afternoon, a shift of the wind came, which entirely altered the prospects of the fight. The wind freshened suddenly and veered to the north of west. That enabled Sir Cloudesley Shovell, with the rear division of the Red Squadron, who had been too far off to help Russell during Tourville's grand attack, to weather the French. They did so, passing through a gap in Tourville's line. The shift of wind also brought up the English Blue Squadron well to windward. It meant to the French the loss of the battle.

The French admiral saw what it all meant. He saw that his chance was gone; but he would not give in yet. Tourville fought on until nearly four o'clock, by which time some of the leading ships of the English Blue Squadron were nearing him and getting within gun-shot. Now all the French tactical advantage vanished. Nothing, as it now seemed, could save the French fleet from defeat, if not indeed from worse still, from annihilation. At that moment, however, "there came on so thick a fog that we could not see a ship of the enemy's, which occasioned our leaving off fire for a little time." "It



was so thick," an officer relates, "that we could not see a ship's length." "We left off firing," says another officer, "for being mingled one amongst another we could not see our friends from our foes."

Thus, at the critical moment, the battle was practically brought to a stop.

Although the fog partially lifted at times, and there was now and again some casual firing between ships here and there, as these caught glimpses of one another, no further combined action was possible all day.

Towards evening the fog cleared off, but by that time the French had made use of their chance and were already in full retreat.

"When the fog cleared up," wrote Admiral Russell from the *Britannia*, "we could see Monsieur Tourville towing away with his boats to the northward from us, upon which I did the same, and ordered all my Division to do the like, and about half an hour after five we had a small breeze of wind easterly. I then made the signal for the Fleet to chase, sending notice to all the ships about me that the enemy were running. . . . I sent all the ships that I could think were near me to chase to the westward all night, telling them I designed to follow the enemy to Brest, and sometimes we could see a French ship, or two or three, standing away with all the sail they could make to the westward. About eight I heard guns firing to the westward, which lasted about half an hour, it being some of our Blue fallen in with some

of the ships of the enemy in the fog. 'Twas foggy and very little wind all night."

During the night the French fleet, by now broken up into groups of ships, made every effort to get away. Three ships, including two flagships, worked round to the north-west, and passing in sight of the Isle of Wight and the Devonshire coast, again got back safely to Brest. Another small group made off at first due south. Turning north-east after that, between the English fleet and Cape Barfleur, they shaped their course through the Straits of Dover, up the North Sea, round the north coast of Scotland and the west coast of Ireland, and finally reached Brest that way.

The greater number of the French ships, however, with Russell in pursuit of them, made off to the south-west, keeping more or less together. Their plan was to shake off pursuit by running through the Race of Alderney. Twenty-two of the French ships got through the Race. The rearmost of the fugitives, some thirteen ships, were, however, caught by the flood-tide as it made, before they were through, and were forced to anchor. But the holding ground proved bad and anchors dragged. Several of the ships lost their anchors. They were swept helplessly back on the flood-tide and driven to eastward, inside of the English fleet.

The *Britannia* and *London* and their consorts in pursuit had also anchored, but, as it proved, in better holding ground.

Driving past the English fleet, ten of the thirteen French ships were able to double Cape Barfleur and get round in the direction of the Bay of La Hogue, where they hoped to be able to anchor close inshore under the protection of the batteries. The transports for the intended invasion were at anchor in La Hogue Bay, the shores of which were white with the tents of the camp of the "Army of the King of England." The sternmost three of the French thirteen, unable to follow all the way round Cape Barfleur, took refuge in the bight of Cherbourg.

The English fleet, for its part, kept all within touch. Part of it, the Dutch contingent and the Blue Squadron, were sent after the French ships which had managed to get through the Race, and were seen to be making for St. Malo. The rest, the Red Squadron, practically intact, followed those that went round into La Hogue Bay.

From the quarter-deck of the *London* next morning they had the ten French ships which had passed inside of them on the flood-tide, in full view at anchor under Cape de La Hague. Orders were promptly given to follow them "and to drive them to ye Eastward." "Cutt and fired guns," notes one of the *London's* officers in his journal.

As the English fleet passed along the coast they saw inshore of them, near Cherbourg (or "Sherbrook," as the *London's* log and most of the others spell the name), the three large French ships that had dropped behind. These were the flagship *Soleil*

*Royal*, which Tourville had quitted owing to her battered condition, and two other three-deckers. The Vice-Admiral of the Red, Delavall, was sent in to deal with them. The *Britannia*, the *London*, and the rest of Admiral Russell's squadron went on after the crowd of French vessels ahead, now seen to be entering the Bay of La Hogue.

Next morning, Sunday, the 22nd of May, Russell headed in for the bay. The French ships had all taken refuge close inshore. They were lying "with topmasts struck, close under the batteries, all aground at low water." The English fleet anchored two miles off the batteries, and very soon afterwards a general signal was made from the *Britannia* for an inshore squadron of third and fourth rates, together with all the boats of the fleet, to prepare to stand in and attack. The execution of the order, according to the custom of the Service, should have fallen to Sir Cloudesley Shovell, as the junior flag-officer, but he had unfortunately been taken seriously ill just before. The direction of the attack fell in consequence to the officer next above him in seniority, Rear-Admiral Rooke.

The afternoon and evening were passed in making preparations. When the men turned in for the night all was practically ready.

At six next morning Vice-Admiral Delavall with his division arrived from Cherbourg and reported that they had burned the *Soleil Royal* and the other ships with her. There was some delay owing to the consequent rearrangements, and the boat attack was



put off until the evening tide. The inshore squadron meanwhile weighed anchor and stood off and on until two in the afternoon, when it returned and anchored. Soundings had meanwhile been taken and the approaches to the bay examined.

The appointed hour for the attack came. "At 5 this afternoon Vice-Adm<sup>l</sup> Rooke went on board ye *Eagle* and hoisted his Flag in her." At six the signal was made for the attacking ships to start. They moved off, all cleared for action, their guns run out, and with a light breeze. The boats led the way, in tow of three fireships. At eight o'clock the ships anchored in ten fathoms and opened fire on the nearest batteries, in order to cover the approach of the boats. These had to pull in at the last, as the fireships grounded half-way.

The boats raced in to close with the French ships in magnificent style. "The seamen strove with each other whose barge should be foremost, and singled out the particular ships they were to attack, according as their fancy and sometimes as a merry mood directed them. They made use of their oars alone as they advanced, without firing. . . . So soon as they got to the sides of the ships, throwing away their musquets, they gave three huzzas and scrambled up the heights above them with their cutlasses in their hands, and many without any arms at all."

Everything was in their favour, and the attack proved comparatively child's play. Although the French had had practically three days' grace to

make their preparations for defence, nothing at all had been done.

Hopeless confusion reigned ashore and afloat on the French side, the results of contradictory orders, indecision, and general panic. At first a Council of War, attended by both James and Tourville, decided to put soldiers on board and fight the ships at anchor in the bay. Then the ships were ordered to be run ashore and beached. That was done, but the guns and other heavy weights had been left on board, wrecking most of the ships when they took the ground. There were over two hundred ship's boats and three light frigates available to render service against the English in the bay. These were not made use of: instead they were beached and dragged up high and dry. Finally, when the English approached, no orders were sent to the soldiers in the batteries, "a mixed force from many regiments, and in such excitement that many of them had fired all their ammunition off before the English had come within two musket shots."

"The cannonade from Fort Lisset," relates Lord Macaulay, "was so feeble and ill-directed that it did no execution. The regiments on the beach, after wasting a few musket shots, drew off. The English boarded the men-of-war, set them on fire, and having performed this great service without the loss of a single life, retreated at a late hour with the retreating tide. The bay was in a blaze during the night, and now and then a loud explosion announced that

the flames had reached a powder room or a tier of loaded guns."

Relics of the French ships are to this day to be seen at very low tides, embedded in the sandy beach of St. Vaast.

Our ships' logs for the most part merely record results. They "found little opposition but small shot from the shore; found the ships abandoned, and entered and fired them—six sail, five three-deckers, and one 70-gun ship." Some mention in addition that one or two of the French ships made a feeble attempt at defence: "having," to quote one log, "still some of their crews on board and all their wounded and some soldiers to defend them, who made a sharp fire from the galleries and gun-room ports."

All was over by ten o'clock, and the blaze of the burning ships lighted the English boats out of the bay.

"At eight next morning," to quote Lord Macaulay once more, "the tide came back strong, and with the tide came back Rooke and his two hundred boats. The enemy made a faint attempt to defend the vessels which were near Fort St. Vaast. During a few minutes the batteries did some execution among the crews of our skiffs; but the struggle was soon over. The French poured fast out of their ships on one side; the English poured in as fast on the other; and with loud shouts, turned the captured guns against the shore. The batteries were speedily silenced. James and Melfort, Bellefonds and Tour-

ville, looked on in helpless despondency while the second conflagration proceeded."

This is from one of the ships' logs as noted by an officer who was with the inshore squadron :—

"Next morning at 5 a'clock the signal was made for the boats to go in and burn the other ships, higher up in the Bay ; the *Kent*, *Deptford*, *Crown*, *Charles* galley, and *Greyhound*, being ordered to deal with the French batteries, which were very strong. Performed, and at 8 began action : the boats went in, fired at with small and great shot, boarded and set another 6 sail on fire, one three-decker and 5 seventy and eighty gun ships."

"The conquerors," to conclude with Lord Macaulay, "leaving the ships of war in flames, made their way into an inner basin where many transports lay. Eight of these vessels were set on fire. Several were taken in tow. The rest would have been either destroyed or carried off had not the sea begun to ebb. It was impossible to do more, and the victorious flotilla slowly retired, insulting the hostile camp with a thundering chant of 'God Save the King!'"

Only a few prisoners were taken. Officers and men alike were possessed of the idea "that the destruction of the ships was their only object." Some of them, indeed, "made apologies . . . for having incumbered themselves with prisoners." It may be added that afloat, during the three boat attacks in La Hogue Bay, there was next to no fighting, Benjamin West's celebrated picture not-



withstanding ; while Admiral Russell's only material loss for both days was the three fireships, which stuck fast and had to be destroyed where they stranded. It was not an exorbitant price for what had been done.

The journal that Captain Aylmer kept on board the *London* has been preserved. It is characteristically brief and to the point, and in its style a typical captain's log of the period. Here is what Captain Aylmer says of the battle and the boat attack :—

“ May 19.—(Wind) : W. by W. & W.S.W.

“ Dunose N.N.W. : Dist. by Estimation, 13 leagues.

“ From yesterday noon to this day noon, moderate gales and Hazie weather. From 12 at noon to 12 at night we Steared away S. and S. by W., with onely our topsails abroad. About 3 in the Morning our Crusers to windward made the signall of seeing the Enemy : at Fower saw the French Fleete consisting of 70 sayle, of which I judged there was 50 men of warr. The Admirall made the signall for the Line of Battle, the French bearing Downe upon us. Between 11 and 12 the French Admiral brought too, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  musquett shott distant. Then the fight began (before our Admir<sup>l</sup> hoysted his bloody flagg) with our heads to the South<sup>d</sup> and head sailes to the mast ; Bearing and Distance as per margt.

“ May 20.—S.W. by W. ; E.S.E. and N.E.

“ From yesterday noon to this day noon little

wind. Between 12 and One a Small Breeze at N.W. by W., verry hazie. About  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour after three the Enemy was at a greater Distance, the Weather hazie and calme. About 6 the Admirall sent me orders to tow towards the Enemy, and by that tyme the Shipp's head lay at West. Sprung up a small breeze at E.S.E. and the French making the best of their way from us. About 8 or 9 heard firing for  $\frac{1}{2}$  an hour and saw a Great Shipp on Fyre some tyme after. About 2 the gale freshening left off towing. At 4 Cleared up the French being about 3 Leagues ahead of us, steering away W. by W.S.W., wee chaseing them.

"May 25.—N.N.E. & E.S.E.

"Cape De Barfleur, N.B.W.: Dist. by Estimation, 3 Leagues.

"From yesterday noon small Gales and fair weather. Yesterday at 3 in the afternoon the Adm<sup>l</sup> made a Signall for all y<sup>e</sup> Boats (Vice Amir<sup>l</sup> Rooke shifted his flagg On board ye *Eagle*). Went in for ye shore and at night burnt 6 of ye great Shipp's and this morning the boats went in and burnt the rest with some Transport Shipp's and a ffireshipp. The Admir<sup>l</sup> of ye Blew and ye Dutch we left off of Cape de Hague yesterday, in the afternoon joyned us."

Admiral Russell weighed anchor for Spithead on the 26th of May. The *London* and her consorts had done their work.

The guns that should have conquered us they lay rusting on the shore ;

The men that would have mastered us they drummed and marched no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

What happened after the battle, and the way in which the news was received in England, have also an interest of their own.

The fleet went back to St. Helens to receive its rewards and to bury its dead.

In England they knew already what had happened, or at any rate the all-important fact that victory was ours. Admiral Russell had lost no time in sending word to Queen Mary at Whitehall that his men had done their duty, and victoriously. On the morning of the 20th, while following the enemy up, he had hastened off the auspiciously named *Mary* galley, one of the *Britannia's* tenders, to tell the nation that the French had been met and beaten, and were in full flight.

Captain Griffiths, the messenger, with his packet of four letters—one to the Queen, one to the Admiral's wife, two to the Earls of Bedford and Nottingham, Lords of the Council—arrived at Whitehall on horseback at four o'clock on Saturday morning the 21st, within twenty-four hours of the penning of the despatch in the cabin of the *Britannia*.

Nottingham sent word before breakfast to the Lord Mayor. No details had come to hand, he wrote, but the tidings were "enough to make your Lordship's and every Englishman's heart rejoice." Before noon

two messengers were galloping across Essex for Harwich. The one in advance had instructions to command the Mayor of Harwich, in the Queen's name, to get ready the fastest vessel in port immediately, to carry news of the first importance to the King in Flanders. The second messenger had the King's despatch in his wallet and was to deliver it personally.

Tremendous enthusiasm greeted "the great and good news" in London: the Tower guns were fired and flags were hoisted everywhere; with "the ringing of bells and bonfire fires at night."

On the 23rd Captain Mees, Admiral Delavall's flag-captain, arrived with the news of "the burning and blowing up of three French three-deckers" at Cherbourg. What his men and the sailors of the *Mary* galley told about the battle soon reached London. "Eight or nine of the French capital ships sunk; that Admiral Russell had sailed up to Tourville within pistol shot and poured in a broadside upon him and sunk him to rights." The *London* and the *St. Andrew*, it was also said, had "sunk Tourville's two seconds by his side."

Nothing more was known for three days, during which interval, at the kind-hearted Queen's instance, forty surgeons were collected and sent down to Portsmouth to receive the wounded, and the London hospitals were also ordered to have beds ready to take in the more serious cases. The Barber-Surgeons' Company was further requested to find a second batch of forty doctors.



On the 27th another express from Admiral Russell came to hand. He had burned, he reported, twelve of the French warships in the Bay of La Hogue, and had not lost more than twenty men in doing it. Next day yet another despatch reported that in all sixty-two of the enemy's transports had been destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The only vessels of the line in Tourville's fleet that escaped destruction were those that got into St. Malo, pursued by the English Blue and White squadrons. They were nearly overtaken before they reached there, and in the end only got inside the harbour at the last moment, through the heroic forlorn-hope daring of a single man who volunteered to save the fleet after every one else had abandoned the idea in despair and given up the venture as hopeless. The incident afforded Browning a subject for one of his finest poems.

The French ships, twenty-two in number, arrived in disorder and panic-stricken, led by the *Formidable*, with which the *London* had fought a round in the battle, the flagship of D'Aumfréville.

“ Helter-skelter through the blue,  
Like a crowd of frighten'd porpoises a shoal of sharks pursue,  
Came crowding ship on ship to Saint-Malo on the Rance,  
With the English fleet in view.”

How to cross the bar was the question ; how to enter the shallow river ; how to reach the inner harbour under the guns of Solidor. As they let go anchor the topsails of the pursuing English came in sight on the northward horizon. But there was none to give advice.

“ Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt on board ;  
‘ Why, what hope or chance have ships like these to pass ? ’ laughed they :

‘ Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage scarr'd and scored,—

Shall the *Formidable* here, with her twelve and eighty guns,  
Think to make the river-mouth by the single narrow way,  
Trust to enter—where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty tons,

And with flow at full beside ?

Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring ? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,

Not a ship will leave the bay ! ”

Hurriedly brought together in council of war on board the *Formid-*

Then the fleet itself anchored at St. Helens.

The total English losses were reported at some fifteen hundred killed and wounded. Sir Cloudesley Shovell, it was added, had been wounded in the thigh. One flag-officer and one captain had fallen—Rear-Admiral Carter of the *Blue Squadron*, and Captain Hastings of the *Sandwich*. “The nation has lost a good officer of Hastings,” wrote Admiral Russell, “the King might have spared a fourth rate frigate, so much value I set upon him.” Hastings lies buried in St. James’s, Piccadilly, where he was laid to rest with full military honours. Admiral Carter was buried at Portsmouth a week after the fleet arrived there. He had been mortally wounded on the evening of the 19th. He was the officer whom the tavern politicians of London had

*able*, the French captains said the same. Their situation, all agreed, was hopeless: “France must undergo her fate!” One course only was left them, said the captains unanimously—to beach and burn the *Formidable* and all the squadron with her. How one man, Hervé Riel—

“A simple Breton sailor press’d by Tourville for the fleet,  
A poor coasting pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese”—

came forward, and at the risk of his head undertook to carry the whole squadron into safety by a channel that he alone dared attempt, himself on board the *Formidable*, and ship after ship following the flagship’s lead; how he did it; and how, for it all, when summoned before the admiral and told to name what reward he would, he only asked—

“A good whole holiday!

Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle Aurore;—  
That he ask’d and that he got,—nothing more.”—

what happened there and then gave the poet his inspiration.

Ultimately, during August, the St. Malo ships were able to run the gauntlet of the vessels of the English squadron that was blockading them, and to work their way safely round to Brest.

damned as the blackest Jacobite traitor of all. "Fight the ship!" were the dying Carter's last words to his flag-captain as he was being carried off the quarter-deck; "Fight the ship as long as she can swim!" Nelson himself could hardly have bettered that. Admiral Carter's funeral was conducted with the fullest naval honours.

"This afternoon," records the log of one of the flagships at St. Helens on the 3rd of June, "Ye flagships having fir'd, all ye Blew Squadron fir'd, one after another at ye Interment of Reer adm<sup>l</sup> Carter, Reer-Adm<sup>l</sup> of ye Blew, who was kil'd this last Engagement agnst ye French and Interrd this day at Portsmouth. Wee fired 24 guns aboard of us; ye 2nd and 3rd Rates etc, portionably."

First, rowing at a slow pace through the fleet, all the ships lying meanwhile with flags and ensigns at half-mast, the barge of the late rear-admiral's flagship, the *Duke*, led the way, with musicians on board playing a funeral march. Then, rowing abreast came three captains' barges, the centre one bearing the body in its coffin, covered with Admiral Carter's flag. It was attended by the captain and lieutenants of the *Duke*. Next, in long procession, in close order, followed the barges of all the captains of the Blue Squadron. All the boats flew pennants and flags at half-staff; and as the procession passed each ship the sailors on board manned the shrouds and stood silently, with hats off, while the marines stood on deck with arms at the present. As the *Duke's* barge with the body moved away

minute guns began to fire. Then continued until the procession had entered the harbour. Only the *Duke* now continued firing, until at length the cessation of the guns on the King's bastion on shore at Portsmouth announced that the interment had taken place. On that all the ships of the fleet rehoisted colours, all except the *Duke*, which remained with her pennant and ensign at half-mast until sunset.

At Spithead also it fell to the captain of the *London* to assist in trying an officer for misconduct in the late battle. There were three cases in all. Two of them were dealt with by Admiral Russell himself. They were those of the first lieutenants of the *Sandwich* and *Hampton Court*, "for running from the Fleet with their ships during the engagement, the Commander of the former being killed and Capt. Graydon of the latter rendered incapable by his hurt of taking charge of her." In the first case Bernard Darby of the *Sandwich*, an ex-merchant skipper formerly employed by Daniel Defoe, was brought before the admiral. It was alleged that on seeing Captain Hastings fall he "flung himself down on his face and refused to perform his duties until the other officers threatened to throw him overboard." Admiral Russell summarily dismissed Lieutenant Darby from the King's service, as he did the officer of the *Hampton Court*. The third officer, Lieutenant John Pyke, the second lieutenant of the *Swiftsure*, he tried by court-martial, before a court over which he himself presided, with Admirals Delavall and Rooke, and twenty-seven



captains as members. The charge against Lieutenant Pyke was that "he did absent himself from his post and forsake his station by retiring into the Captain's storeroom and remaining there for the space of two hours." He was found guilty, and his sentence, as recorded in the minutes of the trial, was as follows: "That he be dismissed from his employment on Board the said shipp *Swiftsure*, and that he be carryd in a Boat, with a Halter about his Neck, to every English Flagship in the Fleet, on Saturday the Twentieth Day of August instant, betwixt the hours of Ten and Twelve of the Clock in the morning; and his Crime to be there declar'd by the Provost Marshall with Beate of Drumme."

The sentence was duly carried out, as the *London's* log records:—"20 August.—Lieutenat Pyke, 2nd Lieut. of their Majesties Ship the *Swiftsure*, was by sentence of Ct. Marshall towedd from shipp to shipp this day with a halter about his neck (for cowardice), having hidd himself in ye storeroom in time of ye late Ingagement."

For all who did their duty, officers and men alike, there was no lack of rewards. The Queen herself led the way. As a reward to the victors from the Crown, the Queen ordered £30,000 to be sent down to Portsmouth for distribution among the seamen. The money was part of a loan from the Corporation of the City of London, obtained by the Earl of Nottingham, who raised it by taking advantage of the enthusiasm of the moment, on the very day after Russell's first despatch was made public. Medals

were ordered to be struck for presentation to every captain in the battle ; also a gold medal for Captain Mees, who brought home the despatch recording the destruction of the *Soleil Royal*. Medals and chains of honour were struck for the fireship captains. We of these days have abiding memento of La Hogue in Greenwich Hospital, "a memorial of the virtues of the good Queen, of the love and sorrow of William, and of the great victory of La Hogue," as well as the presence in our modern fleet of a battleship, the *Barfleur*, and a cruiser, the *Hogue*. The name *Barfleur* was appointed for the first big man-of-war laid down after the battle. Her figurehead represented Admiral Russell attired as a Roman general, standing erect and with arm raised, pointing ahead, his baton of command in his right hand.

\* \* \* \* \*

There was no more fighting for the *London* that year. After four or five weeks of cruising off the coast of Brittany and in the Straits of Dover in front of Dunkirk, all the fleet returned to Spithead for the final dispersal to their home ports to lie up for the winter. All had withdrawn by Michaelmas except a small squadron of fourth-rates. It was contrary to the practice of those days to keep the first and second rates—big, unweatherly vessels as they were—at sea after the end of August, except in cases of grave emergency. All third-rates in home waters, it was held, ought to be at their ports by Michaelmas ; and the fourth-rates by the end of

October. "A man who kept the Capital ships out after September," wrote Sir Cloudesley Shovell, "would deserve to be shot."

O ye mighty ships of war,  
 What in winter did you there?  
 Wild November should our ships retire  
 To Chatham, Portsmouth, and the Nore;  
 So it was always heretofore—  
 For Heaven itself is not unkind,  
 If winter storms He'll sometimes send;  
 Since 'tis supposed the Men of War,  
 Are all laid up and left secure

—wrote Daniel Defoe in his poem on the "Great Storm" of November, 1703, when thirteen men-of-war were lost, voicing the general criticism on the Admiralty for allowing a fleet to be at sea at all, at that time of year.

## XII

### BEHIND THE SCENES IN WAR: ON GUARDSHIP DUTY AT THE NORE

WE get next a glimpse of a very curious phase of naval life in those times: a look round behind the scenes.

The *London*, after cruising during 1693 and the early summer of the following year in the Channel and off the French coast,<sup>1</sup> left the Main Fleet and passed round to the Nore for special duty there. From July to October, 1694, she filled the rôle of "guardship at the Nore, and Senior Officer's ship of the King's vessels in the Thames and Medway."

It was a post of importance, on the high road to promotion, and one that promised to put Captain Christopher Billop of the *London* on the flag list

<sup>1</sup> The *London* was one of the ships of the "Maine Fleet" present at the attack on Camaret Bay in June, 1694, which miscarried so disastrously through the treason of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, who furnished the enemy beforehand with full information, "the basest," as Macaulay calls it, "of the hundred villainies of Marlborough." Captain Christopher Billop of the *London* looked on from his quarter-deck at the fighting as the landing parties strove desperately to gain a footing on the beach, and noted down his observations in his journal. The *London's* boats were in the thick of the fray. They carried in five companies of soldiers: four of Colonel Rowe's



before long. He had already for three months held with credit the desirable position of captain of a first-rate : his due, no doubt, as a good seaman and an energetic officer ; partly, too, on account of the smart way in which, not long after the battle of Beachy Head, he had pounced down on and captured the Jacobite conspirator Preston and his associates, with papers on them which brought a number of prominent people to the scaffold.

Seeing to the local supply of seamen for the fleet at sea, and for ships fitting and refitting at Chatham and Sheerness, was one of the captain of the *London's* duties. These extracts from Captain Billop's journal will serve to show how it was carried out.

"3 July.—Between 1 and 2 anchored at the Nore in 12 fath., a fleet of Colliers coming up. Sent all my boats and small vessels a-pressing."

"4 July.—Sent off our boats and tenders a-pressing aboard ye colliers and Mercht. shipps from ye Southwd. : gott but few men that were good. After-

regiment, and one of Cole's. This is the captain of the *London's* version of what he saw, as he wrote it :—

"By 11—Noon, The English and 4 Dutch frigatts under ye command of my L<sup>d</sup> Carmarthen, began to batter ye Forts and Platforms in Carmerick Bay to cover ye land Forces getting ashoare. About 12 att noone all ye Forces putt from ye Adm<sup>l</sup> of ye Blewe's shipp with a fine Breeze att N.E. by N. and E.N.E. Soe soone as the Generall landed with as many gran'deers as could gett ashoar with him they were soe warmly received from ye Trenches with small shott, and the rockes above them with stones and granadoes, that most of them were killed and the Generall wounded in the Thigh ; soe were forced to Retreate. About 5—Afternoon, ye shipps came off much battered. One of ye Dutch struck and was left there. Wee lost one of our well-boates and 3 seamen."

noon: came up about 28 sail of Mercht. shippes from severall parts; their men being all taken out before."

"19 Aug.—In ye Afternoone came up about 50 sayle of Colliers. I brought as many of them to anchor as I could and putt sold<sup>r</sup> on board to try if I could find any men."

Every other day almost we meet entries such as these:—

"Our tender came in from ye River with pressed men."

"Our tender came from Yarmouth Roads with pressed men."

"The tender brought Mareen recruits from London."

Incidentally also we have this reminder of the old-time usage of the sea which required all merchant ships to dip their colours when passing a King's man-of-war.

"11th July.—This afternoone past by us severall mercht. shippes upp and down. Fired att many of them to make them strike."

Another duty that devolved on Captain Billop was the holding of courts-martial. Here are a couple of extracts from the captain's log.

"16 July.—A courtmartiall was held on board the *London* where a deserter was condemned."

The man would appear in the end to have escaped the yard-arm. On the 11th of August Captain Billop made this note: "The *Smirna Factor* had ye condemned man that deserted ye *Hampton Court*."

The want of men for the fleet was particularly troublesome at this time, and the authorities in many cases remitted the death penalty and shipped convicted offenders off to serve again. In this connection there is a curious note extant in regard to a death sentence on three deserters condemned at a court-martial of which Benbow was president. All three were condemned "to be hanged by the neck till they are dead, dead, dead. But in regard of the want of men its further the opinion of the court martiall that they heave a Die, and one only to suffer death, the other two to be whipt from ship to ship with a halter about their neck."<sup>1</sup>

The second extract from Captain Billop's journal runs thus :—

"22nd August.—Captain Holmes, two gunners, and three pylotts tried at a court Martiall and the former suspended. Ye two gunners dismissed. One pylott fin'd and another clear'd: ye 3rd order'd to

<sup>1</sup> Extraordinary tales are told of the shifts to which the naval authorities were put in the days of William the Third and Queen Anne to find men for the seagoing fleets. A complaint, it is on record, was made by the French Government in 1707, under flag of truce, "that some hundred or more of the prisoners taken at Ramillies had been compelled to serve in the British fleet." Some of the Ramillies prisoners, no doubt, did find their way on board ship, being prompted to volunteer with the idea of bettering their condition. The life of a prisoner of war in England in the days of Queen Anne needed Spartan endurance. Parliament, in 1706, in order to help in keeping sufficient men-of-war at sea to safeguard commerce, passed a special Act forcing debtors under judgment for sums below £60 to join the Navy or find substitutes. Gaol deliveries were emptied into the fleet all over the country. It is on record that at Bristol in 1706 "a burglar condemned to death was pardoned on condition that he joined the Navy, and a half-witted prisoner at the same Assize was ordered to join the Marines."

goe from shipp to shipp with a halter about his neck."

Other rather curious entries in the *London's* log are these :—

"18 August.—Much lightning Thunder and Raine between 5 and 6 this morning. Our main topmast was splitt and rendered unserviceable by a clapp of Thunder."

"27 August.—Saluted ye Duke of Leinster with 17 guns."

This is a reminder of the old naval regulation which enjoined the firing of gun salutes to members of the nobility.

Another entry that reads curiously nowadays is this :—

"8 January, 1695.—This morning we took on board Capt. Cooper's, Capt. Bennett's and my own company of Mareens."

In addition to being captain of the *London*, Captain Billop also held a commission as captain of the 14th company of the 1st Marines (Lord Danby's, formerly the Earl of Torrington's)—a privilege granted to certain naval captains in those times, which carried pecuniary advantages. It was a peculiar arrangement in many ways. At Barfleur, indeed, where Captain Billop was captain of the *Suffolk* and did good service, he had his marine company on board with him, and besides fighting the ship, he performed at the same time the ordinary executive duties of a captain of marines, with two lieutenants of marines to assist him. He also held, it may be added as



another curious detail, while captain of the *London*, a captain's commission in the Earl of Danby's regiment of dragoons.

Then we meet with this entry in Captain Billop's journal:—

“10 August.—Several Macheens came down w<sup>ch</sup> I immediately manned and Dispatched, and Rigg'd up with all speed. I lett Sir Martin Beckman have one of ye Pinnaces. He sailed with 14 Macheens and 3 store shippes to ye Downes.”

These “Macheens,” or “Infernals,” as they were also called, were a contrivance invented by England's great military engineer of the time, Sir Martin Beckman, for employment in the series of attacks on the French seaports then being carried out. They were old vessels for the most part, of from three to five hundred tons, packed full of barrels of gunpowder, carcasses, shells, bar shot, chains, and scrap iron. It was proposed to run them in alongside the town walls and blow them up there—the crews escaping beforehand in boats after firing the train of slow-match—trusting to the consternation and devastation caused by so awful an explosion to paralyse the enemy's resistance.

The policing of the Medway was at that period carried out in war time under the orders of the captain of the guardship at the Nore. Elaborate precautions were customary for the watching of the ships laid up in the river; alike those refitting and the array of older vessels kept laid up “in ordinary,” at the

moorings between Blackstakes, above Sheerness, and Chatham Dockyard. Three men-of-war acted as river guardships: one moored just below Rochester Bridge; one off Upnor Castle; one at Blackstakes; with a fireship at Sheerness, within signalling range of the guardship at the Nore. Together with these, twenty ten-oared rowing-boats formed the establishment provided "for the greater security of H.M.'s navy and preventing any evil designs upon or accidents of the ships." Their purpose was "to be nightly imployed in rowing among and hayling ye ships in ordinary as they passe, ye better to keep ye persons on board them in a watchfull posture." In addition, they were now and again to explore all creeks and places where boats might be concealed, "for ye preventing of Thieving or Imbezilment, as any surprizal by an Enimie."

Two guardboats were on duty at night, as river patrol: one from the setting of the watch, when the Upnor guardship fired the sunset gun, to midnight; the second from midnight to "ye breaking of ye watch" at sunrise. Each carried ten men and a coxswain, and was equipped with half a dozen half-pikes and "musketts with powder and bullets."

As it passed along the line of men-of-war the guardboat had to challenge the watch-keepers in the ships. If not answered, the coxswain was to board any vessel and report to the senior officer at the Nore next day. Apparently there was sometimes trouble over the challenging. Some of the watch-

keepers—perhaps irate at being roused out of a surreptitious nap—were not always polite in their replies. Some of them, the complaint was formally made to the Admiralty, “do rather ridicule than obey ye commands given them, and treat you oftentimes with insolent language.”

If sudden danger was discovered, or in case of fire, the men in the boat were to let off three shots in quick succession; on which the watch-keeper on board each of the ships in the river was to fire off a musket and ring the ship's bell. In addition, the ship nearest the guardboat or point of danger was to burn flares and fire off a cannon at intervals until help came; first of all, in the shape of the hurrying to the spot of the nineteen guardboats off duty, which were supposed to be all times kept ready for service, distributed alongside the river guardships, so many to each vessel.

The Admiralty, we are told, during the autumn of 1694 were peculiarly nervous about attempts being made on the dockyards, and constant warnings were sent to the guardships to be on the alert. At Chatham there was a “scare” in October. A rumour had reached the Admiralty that some Irish Jacobites had designed to burn the dockyard. By order of the Navy Board, the guards were doubled ashore and afloat; additional watchmen were enrolled and militia patrols told off along the banks of the Medway. Every Irishman employed in the yard at Chatham was brought up before the Clerk of the Cheque and closely questioned, the Commissioner

being present, as to "how long they had served and why they first came to England." Nothing, however, it would seem, came of the alarm.

Besides the guardships, the Medway anchorage was at this time protected by no fewer than seven forts and batteries, with Upnor Castle and Sheerness Fort—erected since the Dutch raid, which cost the *Loyall London* her existence as a man-of-war—Cockham Wood Fort, James's Battery, Gillingham Fort, Hoo Fort, Quaker's Battery, mounting in all 230 guns, from heavy culverins to sakers and three-pounders.

Captain Billop's command of the *London* ended abruptly—and unfortunately. He had got himself into serious trouble, as it would appear, over money matters. Early in February, 1695, preliminary steps were taken against him with a view to proceedings at common law, and he was ordered to report himself at the Admiralty. This is his last entry in the *London's* log:—

"22 February.—This day I was discharged from the command of the ship."

He was indicted at the Old Bailey on a charge of "Forging a letter of Attorney to a Ticket for ye Receipt of Seamen's Wages," and was acquitted by the jury. The Admiralty, however, formed an adverse opinion on the case, and in the result it was decided "that Captain Billop be dismiss from his Employnt upon severall complaints against him and that the Navy Board bee directed to discharge



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him." So under a cloud ended what had at one  
time seemed a very promising career.

Captain Stafford Fairborne (afterwards Sir Stafford, and Vice-Admiral of the Red), an officer of marked ability and high up on the post-captains' list, succeeded Captain Billop in the *London* and as "Commander in Chief of his Majesty's shipp in the River of Thames and the Medway," as he himself puts it in his journal. He held the command throughout 1695.

Here is an entry in the log of the *London* while guardship at the Nore during this year :—

"13 May.—Att Night his Ma<sup>tie</sup> passing by in the *William and Mary* Yacht was saluted with gunns and Huzzas from each shipp here."

King William was on his way to open the famous campaign in Flanders of 1695, the most brilliant and successful of all he ever took part in, including as it did the tremendous victory at Namur, when, as it was said, "for the first time since France had Marshals a Marshal of France delivered up a fortress to a victorious enemy"; and the hardly less amazing, to the world of that day, out-manceuvring of another French marshal, Villeroy, King Louis's *alter ego* in the field, and with a reputation at Versailles as the first of the Marshals of France, until on a later day the Duke of Marlborough found him out once for all, as it is recorded in the old camp ballad of "Corporal John":—

Then May good luck and Ramillies brought,  
At Ottomond's tomb by the red Mehaigne :

To slaughter our Corporal, Villeroy thought,  
 But the French and their Marshal we thrashed amain.  
 Eighty standards and every gun  
 Our Corporal took on that glorious day !

In 1695 Villeroy was Louis the Fourteenth's generalissimo, in the place of the dead Luxembourg, and King William on that May evening as he passed by the *London* at the Nore was full of anxiety as to how, with that new antagonist in the field, the fortune of the campaign would go.

Under Captain Fairborne the routine duties of the command went on as before : pressing men for the fleet ; port correspondence with the Admiralty ; the holding of courts-martial.

One of these last was of a kind happily uncommon in the annals of the Royal Navy—the court-martial on the captain and officers of the *Hope*, a man-of-war of seventy guns, for the loss of their ship in action. The *Hope* had been sent to sea, as one of the escort of a large convoy, with an invalid captain, a raw ship's company, and only one lieutenant. She lost her consorts at night in the Channel in a fog, a junior officer, a mate, being in charge at the time. Two days later Duguay Trouin, the French terror of the sea, with five sixty- and fifty-gun ships, met the *Hope*. The British crew made a fight of it for eight hours ; then they surrendered. "We had," reported the lieutenant to the Admiralty, "both pumps going most of the time, and seven feet of water in the hold ; we had lost all our masts ; and the ship rolled

so much that we could not manage any of our guns." Both the captain and the lieutenant were acquitted. The mate was condemned. He was held responsible for the disaster, in having allowed the ship to lose her consorts. He was found guilty of having, when on watch, let the ship get taken aback, paid her off on the wrong tack, and then made no signal to the squadron in company. This was the hapless fellow's sentence :—

"That he be carried with a halter about his neck from ship to ship to all the ships at Chatham and Gillingham, and his crime be read by beat of drum by each ship's side ; that all pay due to him in his Majesty's service be forfeited to the Chest at Chatham, and that he be rendered incapable for ever of serving his Majesty in any capacity for the future as an officer."

Another of the courts-martial on board the *London* is recorded in Captain Fairborne's log in these words :—

"17 July.—This day call'd a Court Martiall at wch were tryd three persons and one orderd to bee whipt from shipp to shipp ; another, sentence of Death past upon him ; and the other acquitted."

"18 July.—The punishment of whipping this day was executed on William Smith."

The man who was acquitted was one "George Segar, a Marine Sold<sup>r</sup> accused of running away with a Boat from the *Royal Katherine*." He got off, but, poor man, only to fall from the frying-pan into the fire. This is how the judgment ran :—

“It not appearing to this court that the sd George Segar ran away with the said Boat, and that he was not legally listed pursuant to a late Act of Parliament for Listing Soldiers, this court does acquit the sd Geo. Segar and appoint him to serve on board the *Archangel*, before the mast.”

It was hard on the unlucky George ; to be found not guilty of what he was accused of, also to be legally proved a civilian, and in consequence outside the jurisdiction of the tribunal that he appeared before, and yet to be forcibly drafted off to compulsory drudgery on board a ship under orders to sail for the deadliest station a man could be sent to at that period, for service in the West Indies on board a cruiser off the Spanish Main.

Incidentally, the illegal treatment of George Segar throws light on the urgent needs of the Navy for men. Even a bounty of forty shillings a man did not suffice to keep up the supply.

The guardships at each port, as we have seen, served as entrepôts for the ships at sea. Finding hands to send on board the fleet kept Captain Fairborne even busier than his predecessor had been.

In addition to seventy ships serving with the Main and Mediterranean fleets, there were, in the summer of 1695, no fewer than sixty-one “employed in Home Waters for the Protection of Trade”—nine third-rates, eighteen fourth-rates, eighteen fifth-rates, and sixteen sixth-rates. Five ships patrolled the North Sea ; eleven up and down the East Coast ; one was stationed off the North Foreland. The



*London* had, as her special province, to see to the manning of these seventeen. Fifteen other ships patrolled the English Channel ; one watched off the Lizard ; five cruised in the Bristol Channel ; one was stationed off Cape Clear ; thirteen at the junction of the trade routes, "in soundings," to the south of the Scilly Isles. Three watched off the west of Ireland and five in the Irish Sea, one to the north-west of Scotland.

To give an idea of the actual state of affairs in home waters which necessitated the employment of so many ships, this should be added. Privateers from Dunkirk, Havre, Dieppe, and St. Malo swarmed in the Four Seas during the summer and autumn of 1695 more actively than before. Duguay Trouin, at the head of a division of swift light cruisers, although Benbow had been specially told off to lay him by the heels, was everywhere in the North Sea. St. Pol and Nesmond, working with corsair-squadrons of the fastest of the French King's men-of-war, evaded capture in the most tantalizing manner, and harried the Channel commerce, both English and Dutch. A number of deeply laden sugar-ships from Barbados fell into their hands, in addition to five large East India ships "with cargoes of which the value was popularly estimated at a million."

Owing to the enemy's depredations in the Channel, as a fact, arrangements were made for the homeward-bound fleets of richly laden Indiamen (especi-

ally the Dutch ships) to avoid the English Channel altogether, and go north-about, round the Shetlands and down the North Sea to the Texel and the Thames; while much of our West Indian merchandise, then carried by a class of long, fast ships called "Bristol galleys or runners" (easily moved under oars), was, after being landed at Bristol, sent by water to Gloucester, whence it was taken overland to Lechlade, and thence down the Thames to London, the merchants there finding this mode of carriage more than pay for the extra insurance and risk of capture in the Channel.

The *London* paid off as guardship in October, and was docked at Chatham in view of her resuming sea service at an early date.

At the end of the year Sir Stafford Fairborne exchanged ships with Captain Thomas Jennings of the *Victory*, who hoisted his pennant on board the *London* on New Year's Day, 1696.

We get one more very interesting glance behind the scenes in connection with the *London*.

While fitting the ship out for sea at the anchorage at Blackstakes, a little above Sheerness, Captain Jennings took part in the trial by court-martial of the warrant officers and ship-keepers of the *Royal Sovereign* (formerly known as the *Sovereign of the Seas*, the historic man-of-war built by Charles the First) for the loss of that famous ship by fire while lying in the Medway.

They saw the fire from the *London*, some two miles off, though this is all that the log records:—

“27 January.—This 24 hrs., fresh gales: Morning about 5 ye *Royall Sovereign* by accident was burnt at her moorings at Gillingham.”

The court-martial sat on board the *St. Michael*, Lord Berkeley of Stratton presiding. With him were Sir Cloudesley Shovell and seventeen captains. One of these was the captain of the *London*.

A ship's boy of fifteen was the principal witness before the court. At four on the morning that the ship was burned, said the boy, he called Thomas Couch, the senior watch-keeper, an old sailor who had served on board the *Sovereign* for over seventeen years. The boy then went off to see to the galley fire, and Couch went on deck to keep his watch, leaving a lighted candle in his cabin on the middle deck. He came back again in a few minutes, lighted his pipe at the candle, and returned on deck. Ten minutes or so after that the boy noticed smoke on the middle deck and went to see what was the matter. He found Couch's cabin ablaze and shouted for help. One or two men came, but only one bucket could be found. They tried to put the fire out with a cask of drinking water, but had to give it up. The flames quickly blazed up more furiously than before, and then caught some new tarpaulins and canvas, and spread to the booms amidships, where the spars and cordage were stacked. They were dry as tinder and were instantly alight. By five o'clock the whole vessel within was a furnace, the

flames shooting high into the air, making a great glare in the sky, "like day," as the boy told the court.

None of the warrant officers in charge of the *Sovereign*, it came out, were on board that night. The boatswain had been working all the previous day in Chatham Dockyard, and when he started to come off to the ship in the evening his boat stuck in the mud. So he slept ashore, and was next seen on the bank of the Medway early in the morning, while the ship was burning, cursing and wringing his hands, and trying to get a boat to take him on board. The purser was on leave, it being his "free week." The gunner was also on leave. The carpenter was on shore sick, as he told the court, but he had not, it came out, taken the trouble to report his absence. The armourer was burned to death in his berth "before he was awake."

The handful of ship-keepers on board the *Sovereign* fought the flames unaided from outside. Apparently everybody in the dozen ships thereabouts was asleep, watch and all. No alarm was raised—it was sworn to before the court—on board any of the ships near by. A woman, one Mary Plowden, claimed to have been the first to give the alarm in the dockyard. She was granted a reward of fifty pounds by the Admiralty. The ship's duty-boat in tow drifted away, the painter being burned through, and only the opportune arrival of a four-oared galley from the *Britannia*, an hour after the outbreak, but before any of the guardboats got to the place, saved the men on board.



The court-martial in the result acquitted everybody except two men. Thomas Everden, the sick carpenter, was found guilty of neglect of duty, and sentenced to forfeit all his pay and be imprisoned for one year. On old Couch they fell heavily. "It appeared to the court," says the official minute of the judgment, "that the fire began in a cabin near the entering port, where an old man, one Thomas Couch, lay, who left a candle in the cabin and was himself upon deck, it being his watch. And the Court do find that he has been guilty of negligently performing his duty and it is resolved that he falls under the 27th Art. ; and the Court does adjudge that the said Thomas Couch shall be carried in a boat with a halter about his neck on board the hulk against Chatham dock next muster day, and there receive 31 stripes on his bare back, and that he be afterwards carried on shore and delivered to the Marshall and be imprisoned during his life, and that he forfeit all the pay due to him to the Chest at Chatham."

The *London* rejoined the fleet at sea shortly afterwards, and served with Sir Cloudesley Shovell and Benbow and Sir George Rooke, cruising off Brest and in the Bay of Biscay to the end of the war.

She returned to Portsmouth with the "Main Fleet" at the close of hostilities, and took part in the local rejoicings in honour of the Peace of Ryswick. Says the *London Gazette*:—

"Upon the welcome News of the Peace the Fleet

at Spithead under the command of Sir George Rooke, both English and Dutch fired all their guns, as also the ships in Harbor. Our Garrison at the same time was drawn out and fired 3 Volleys. Guns round the Town and the Castle at Gosport were discharged, and the Night ended with Bonfires, Illuminations and Ringing of Bells."<sup>1</sup>

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The *London's* name came before the public four years later, in connection with this curious newspaper paragraph in the papers of the 29th of July, 1701.

"There is a talk that the *London* man-of-war, being very old, is to be suddenly rebuilt and made as large and fine as the *Royal Sovereign*, at the Charge of the City of London."

How far the talk came to anything does not appear. At any rate, the *London* was "rebuilt," according to the term used in the official returns,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Peace was signed at Ryswick at half-past five on the morning of the 11th of September. It reached England two days later. "Never," said Lord Macaulay, "since the year of the Restoration had there been such signs of public gladness." On the 13th of September, "Prior, with the treaty, presented himself before the Lords Justices at Whitehall. Instantly a flag was hoisted on the Abbey, another on St. Martin's Church. The Tower guns proclaimed the glad tidings. All the towers from Greenwich to Chelsea made answer. In a few hours triumphal arches began to rise in some places. Huge bonfires were blazing in others. In every part of the kingdom where the peace was proclaimed, the general sentiment was manifested by banquets, pageants, loyal healths, salutes, beating of drums, blowing of trumpets, breaking up of hogsheads."

<sup>2</sup> Technically, what was done to the *London* was a rebuild. "We have determined to rebuild the *London*," ran the Admiralty's original instructions to the Navy Board in 1701, "and that such part of the timbers of the said ship as shall be found serviceable shall be made

and in a leisurely way which kept the ship in dock for upwards of five years. She was not floated out until the third week of April, 1706.

The Chatham Dockyard people, in fact, were so long over the business that, as it would appear, the Admiralty entirely forgot what was being done to the *London*. On the 13th of June, 1704, indeed, while the ship was lying in dock a bare skeleton of ribs and frame-timbers, a special order came down to hold the *London* "readie forthwith to goe abroad upon any emergency." The *London* would be wanted, said the order, "in regard of the Accidents of the sea and that several of the ships with Sir George Rooke Vice-Adm<sup>l</sup> of England and Adm<sup>l</sup> of her Majesty's fleet in the Mediterranean may be very much out of repair." June, 1704, as has been said, was very nearly two years before the *London* was in a state to be sent afloat.

The rebuilt *London*<sup>1</sup> served one commission in use of." Practically, the old *London* was entirely taken to pieces and reconstructed, with no doubt here and there some of the sounder beams from the former vessel, into a brand-new man-of-war, a fifth as big again as the old. The master-shipwright at Chatham was the person most affected by the technicality. The launching or undocking of a new man-of-war meant for him, according to the old custom, in the case of a first-rate "a piece of silver plate, or £40 in lieu thereof," presented by My Lords in celebration of the event. When a "rebuilt" ship was sent afloat—although the work on her might have entailed, as it usually did entail, infinitely more trouble—he was entitled to nothing. Pages of correspondence on the subject are in existence between master-shipwrights and the Admiralty, who invariably contrived to get out of making any presentation in such cases.

<sup>1</sup> It was while the *London* was being put together in dock that a notable step in the interests of economy was taken, which makes our eighteenth and nineteenth century men-of-war look so different in

"Queen Anne's War," in the course of which one interesting historic event took place. It fell to her as Commander-in-Chief's ship at the Nore to celebrate the Union of England and Scotland on behalf of the ships of the Royal Navy then in the Thames and Medway.

This is the entry in the *London's* log for the occasion :—

"Thursday, May 1st, 1707.— At 1 P.M. fired 21 guns beeing ye Day appointed for ye Cellebration of ye Union between England and Scotland, we hauving all our fflaggs and Coulors and pendants fflyng."

Just previous to this the *London* had been ordered to prepare for service as one of the flagships of the Mediterranean fleet and take on board her "powder, shott, and sea-beare." A curious official memorandum is extant from the Admiralty to the Duke of Marlborough, Master-General of the Ordnance, desiring him to furnish the *London* "with brass gunns according to the present establishment, as farr as

pictures from those of earlier days and of the Restoration Navy in especial. By an order of the 7th of July, 1703, all carved and gilded ornamentation work was prohibited henceforth. Except in the case of one ship, the *Royal Anne*, which was allowed an effigy of the Queen, figureheads were to consist only of a lion, "plainly cut," with a trail-board and plain mouldings, instead of the elaborate brackets and fancy work supporting the head in the older ships. At the stern the taffrail was to be plainly decorated with mouldings. Two plain quarter pieces would be allowed, but nothing more. The carved brackets forming the frame of the cabin windows were abolished, as were the carved and gilded wreaths round the quarter-deck ports outside. Within-board in the officers' quarters, paint and slit deals were to take the place of gold leaf and fancy woods, and the officers' cabins were made smaller "to give the more room for the men."



Her Majesty's stores can conveniently admitt thereof." The Ordnance Office offered "28 brass gunns for the lower tiere, and 6 brass culverines for the middle tiere." For the rest, added the reply, the *London* must have "Iron demy-culverines, and smaller pieces, since there are no more brass gunns in store."

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The *London* lasted to be the oldest man-of-war in the Royal Navy.<sup>1</sup> Her name flits across the pages of our sea-service annals forty years later, for one brief moment. It was on board the *London*, in the days of George the Second, that the court-martial sat which tried the captains of Admiral Mathews' fleet for misconduct in the battle off Toulon in 1744. Then, as now, naval courts-martial were invariably held afloat. Of the four captains tried on board the *London*, in September and October, 1745, one was "cashiered and pronounced incapable of any employment in his Majesty's service"; one was placed on half-pay; one was "cashiered during his Majesty's pleasure and mulcted of a year's pay"; one was dismissed his ship. Two other captains were to have been tried at the same time, but one fled the country, and the other died on the way to England. Two admirals, one commodore, and twenty-one captains, of whom one was Rodney, composed the court.

<sup>1</sup> According to an Admiralty document, the *London* underwent a "great repair" in 1722.

Miss Elinor Frere, visiting Chatham in 1756 at the time of the Seven Years War, saw the *London* there "turned into a chapel on Sundays, there being but one church." A twelvemonth later, in the year of Admiral Byng's execution, the *London* passed into the hands of the ship-breakers.

### XIII

#### WHEN THE CHANNEL FLEET HAD TO RETREAT

THE *London* of George the Third's Navy came into being under the same Admiralty Order in accordance with which Nelson's Trafalgar *Victory* was built. It was dated the 14th of December, 1758, in the same year in which Nelson was born. By it twelve ships of the line were to be laid down, five of them during the ensuing twelve months. Two of the five were to be three-deckers—one a ship of a hundred guns and one a ship of ninety guns. The others were to be seventy-fours. Both of the three-deckers were allotted to Chatham Dockyard; the hundred-gun ship being the *Victory*, and the ninety-gun ship the *London*. The order to build bears in both cases the historic signatures of Anson and Boscawen, as Sea Lords of the Admiralty.

Sir Thomas Slade, whose portrait hangs in the Anson Ward at Greenwich Hospital, the chief British naval constructor of the age, designed both ships: the *Victory* as an "improved *Royal George*," the *London* as an "improved *Royal William*," as we

should say nowadays. Edward Allen, master-builder at Chatham, had charge of the construction of both ships. The two ships were much of a size, the *Victory* being of 2162 tons, and the *London* of 1894 tons—a difference of only 268 tons.<sup>1</sup>

The 24th of May, 1766—just a hundred years, within a fortnight, from the sending afloat of the *Loyall London*—was the launching-day of George the Third's *London*, and all the Admiralty Lords came down to Chatham for the occasion.

There was still, it is curious to find, a traditional association in people's minds between the City and the *London* man-of-war. This, for instance, is what we read in a newspaper cutting from the *Kentish Post* for Wednesday, May 28th, 1766:—

“The *London*, a fine ninety-gun ship, just rebuilt, which was launched on Saturday from the King's Yard at Chatham, is so called in honour of that loyal city, and was one of the men-of-war made a present of to King Charles the Second, upon his Restoration, by the City of London. The present ship has under her figurehead the arms of the City, finely ornamented. She is said to be the finest ship finished upon the new construction.”

The name “London” and the City arms at the bows were the only associations with the domains of the Lord Mayor, as it would seem, that the *London* of George the Third's Navy ever had; although, accord-

<sup>1</sup> These were the dimensions of the *London*: Gun-deck, 176 ft. 6 in.; length of keel, 152 ft. 6½ in.; breadth, 49 ft. 8½ in.; depth in hold, 21 ft. Upwards of 4000 loads of timber—oak, elm, and fir—were used in the ship.



ing to a newspaper paragraph of the time, Lord Mayor Brass Crosby and Sheriff John Wilkes paid the *London*—then lying up out of commission—an informal visit. That was in 1771, when the Lord Mayor and Court of Conservancy visited the Medway in state, to mark the limits of the City's jurisdiction (over which there had been some dispute) at the boundary stone below Rochester.

Seven years later the first phase of the *London's* active service career was on the point of opening. It was in the month of March, 1778.

War had broken out with France. Tempted by the apparent impotence of England in her war with the revolted colonists of America, the French Government had declared its intention of making common cause with the Americans.

For some time past the British Ministry had been continuously reducing and weakening both the Navy and Army, on the plea of economy. Lord North's Government, yielding to the clamour of the Opposition in the House of Commons for retrenchment in the national expenditure, particularly with regard to the defensive forces of the Crown, had failed to keep the battleship strength of the British fleet up to the two-power standard of those days, "superior to the navies of the House of Bourbon," according to our time-honoured maxim of eighteenth-century statecraft. The doctrine that the British fleet must be superior in strength to the fleets of the two next strongest Powers is by no means a discovery of

modern politicians within the last ten years. As incidents in the *London's* story will show, England was destined to receive a terrible warning as to what failure to remember the vital maxim of her Imperial existence meant.

Lord North's Government, for reasons of party politics and to humour the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in the face of warnings by individual members of Parliament and in both Houses, had deliberately deceived the nation. They palmed off on the country official returns that made a show on paper, but were vitally false. They made up the numbers of line-of-battle ships promised in each year's shipbuilding programme with small sixty-fours or fifty-gun ships, and frigates and cheap small craft, instead of laying down capable ships of the line, "capital ships," such as France and Spain were known to be building. Also, to save money for party uses, they did not replace ships of the line lost or worn out, or "scrapped," according to the modern phrase, as unserviceable. In addition they "dropped" ships of the line that had been openly proposed under various annual estimates. Altogether, between the close of the Seven Years War in 1763 and the outbreak of war with France in alliance with the American rebel colonists in 1778, ninety-seven ships of the line had been struck off the effective list of the British Navy, and been either broken up or made hulks of for harbour-service work. On the other hand, only fifty-four new ships of the line were built in that period. The numerical

difference, to keep up the paper strength of the fleet and deceive the nation, had been made up, as has been said, with smaller-class vessels, of little value for the line of battle for the most part. France in that period had increased her line-of-battle-ship force by fifty-six ships of the line, and Spain hers by fifteen ships ; a joint total increase for the navies of the House of Bourbon of altogether seventy-one ships of the line against an actual British decrease of forty-three ships of the line.

Both France and Spain during this time were consistently pressing on with their preparations for a war with England at no distant date. They were moving forward with ominous rapidity, and with an open indifference to British susceptibilities. Particularly was this the case with France. France, reduced to impotence at sea at the close of the Seven Years War, doubled her navy in numerical force in fifteen years and brought its *personnel* up to a state of efficiency unheard of before. Spain, reduced in 1763 to an even weaker state, was doing her very utmost, and spending almost every dollar in her Treasury, to follow suit. And it was no secret in diplomatic circles that revenge was the motive with both nations, to be taken at the first convenient opportunity.

This is what was taking place in France. At the outset the Duc de Choiseul, the energetic and ambitious French Minister, who held the portfolios both of Foreign Affairs and Marine, made no secret of the aims of his Government ; that it was hoped at Versailles that an opportunity of again

crossing swords with England would be afforded in the course of events. Revenge on England for the Seven Years War was the dominant note of De Choiseul's policy throughout, and all the world was aware of it. M. de Choiseul also had all France at his back. The whole French nation was roused over the wretched display that their navy had made in the Seven Years War, and, stung to the quick at the humiliating terms imposed on France at the Peace of Paris, displayed an unprecedented interest in the Minister's plans for the increase of the fleet. Nothing could exceed the national enthusiasm—entirely inspired with the idea of *la revanche*. At De Choiseul's suggestion, a species of *Flotte-verein* or National Navy League was called into being: public subscriptions towards building men-of-war were set on foot, and provinces, cities, and trading corporations pressed eagerly forward to assist. Paris provided a magnificent three-decker first-rate of a hundred and ten guns, the *Ville de Paris*, at an expense of, in English money, £156,000—twice and half the cost of our own *Royal George*; the Province of Brittany gave another hundred-and-ten-gun three-decker, the *Bretagne*; the Province of Languedoc, an eighty-gun ship, the *Languedoc*; the Etats de Bourgogne, another eighty-gun ship, the *Bourgogne*. Marseilles presented the King with a seventy-four, the *Marseillais*; the Receivers-General of Finance subscribed for and built another seventy-four, named *Le Zélé*; Provence presented a sixty-four; the Etats de Bigorre found the



materials, timber, and canvas and cordage for a frigate. Other provinces and communities not wealthy enough to provide a complete ship made contributions in kind and bore all the expenses of construction. The officers and men of the infantry regiment known as *La Couronne* subscribed a month's pay towards a first-rate building at Brest, which the King, on its being launched, named in honour of the donors *La Couronne*. Contributions were received from eighteen provinces in all, and thirteen millions of francs in addition were raised by private subscriptions—all for the navy. According to a circumstantial report, widely circulated in England, such was the zeal and energy of the French, even among the dockyard workmen, that at Brest they built and completed for sea a three-decker in fourteen months, and a seventy-four in ninety-five days. On this side the Channel, even in war-time, thirty-three months for the turning out of a three-decker and two years for a two-decker was considered smart work.

At the same time the military in France did their part so as to be ready for the destined hour when it should strike. Secret agents, officers of the Irish regiments of the French army for the most part, were from time to time sent across the Channel to make notes on the intended scene of military operations. An elaborate scheme for the invasion of the south-east coast of England was worked out by the Third Section of the *Etat Major* under the personal direction of the Duc de Broglie. The Irish

spies were employed to report on the roads and supplies of forage and water to be found between the Kent and Sussex coast and the capital. What was going on was known in England. A copy of one of the reports sent in, drawn up by an Irish major of Light Infantry in the French service, dealing with a route through Kent to strike into the Dover road by way of Tunbridge, Sevenoaks, Bromley, Beckenham, and Lewisham, with notes as to means of crossing the Medway, sites for camps and strong positions, and so forth, is to this day preserved among the Pitt manuscripts at the British Museum.

The British Government meanwhile, however, studiously kept its eyes shut, and persistently continued its naval and military reductions year after year, caring only about the votes of its partisans in the House of Commons.

Spain, associated with France by ties of royal kinship, and our other enemy in the Seven Years War, was concurrently, in her way, following the example of France. The Spanish Ministry of Marine, with an Irishman of genius in his line at the head of its Corps of Constructors, was turning out the finest ships of war in the world at a rate almost as fast as England could build.

The American colonists took up arms against England in 1775. During the next three years grave suspicions had on more than one occasion been aroused as to the intentions of France in regard to the situation. But beyond mobilizing a small

"Squadron of Observation" for Channel cruising, nothing had been done to increase the British naval forces or to make the fleet ready in the event of European complications ensuing. To all questions in Parliament the answer was always that Ministers "did not believe that either France or Spain had any idea of going to war." In December, 1777, the spark reached the powder: the news reached London and Paris of the capitulation of General Burgoyne at Saratoga.

A week later the news reached London from Paris that an official message had been sent to Dr. Franklin and the other American Commissioners then in France, that His Most Christian Majesty was prepared to recognize the Independence of the Thirteen Provinces. M. de Sartine, the Minister of Marine, according to a news-letter, had openly used these words: "The time has at length arrived when it becomes the policy of France to throw down the gauntlet to Great Britain by frankly avowing herself the champion of the revolted colonists of America." Six weeks later it came out that France had actually signed "a Treaty of Commerce and Alliance with the United States." In regard to that the Marquis de Noailles, the French ambassador in London, a day or two afterwards placed in the hands of Lord Weymouth, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, "as insulting and offensive a note as was ever received by a British Secretary of State." "The United States," it was intimated, "being in full possession of their Independence, His Most Christian

Majesty had thought proper to negotiate with them a treaty of commerce and peace, which had already been duly signed by their respective plenipotentiaries."

England replied by making what had happened a *casus belli*, regardless of consequences. It was all that—as a point of honour—could be done; however unready the Navy might be for war. On the 17th of March a Royal Message was read in both Houses of Parliament to the effect that King George had given Lord Stormonth, the British ambassador at Versailles, instructions to ask for his passports, and that His Majesty trusted that the spirit of his people would furnish him with the means of repelling the insult and uphold the national honour.

The national call to arms brought the *London* into service for the first time. During the month of March she lay off the entrance of the Medway, acting as guardship while the *Victory* and other ships ordered to join Admiral Keppel's flag at Spithead were being fitted out. On the 7th of April instructions came down for the *London* to fit for sea service and reinforce Keppel.

As things turned out, it took six months to get the *London* outside the Medway, and in the interim the first fleet action of the war in home waters was fought without her being present—Keppel's drawn battle with the Brest fleet off Ushant.

That so fine a man-of-war, one of the most power-



ful in the British Navy, and one too that had never yet seen the sea, was not available for the line of battle was a public scandal, due entirely to Admiralty mismanagement. The outbreak of war with France had found the Admiralty utterly unready.

Lord Sandwich, undoubtedly the very worst First Lord that ever sat at Whitehall since the days of Charles the Second, was in charge of naval affairs at that time. Under his *régime* mismanagement, bare-faced roguery, confusion, and disorganization were rampant at all the dockyards.

The *London* at the outset of her career was one of Lord Sandwich's victims.

It had been intended that the *London* should join the fleet for Channel service in March, and the employment, even temporarily as a guardship—and floating barracks for pressed men—of a powerful man-of-war, one of the best of her rate afloat, was scandalous. That she was not available was due to the hopeless state of muddle and confusion that prevailed in the early months of 1778.

Mismanagement, roguery, disorganization were rampant at Chatham, as elsewhere, under Lord Sandwich's *régime* at the Admiralty, "the direct outcome of his procedure and of his assigning the charge of departments and of stores to men without a single qualification beyond their votes." "Throughout his long administration," adds Sir John Knox Laughton of Lord Sandwich, "he rendered the business of the Admiralty subservient to the interests of his party, and employed the vast patronage

of the office as an engine for bribery and political jobbery." Storehouses were empty, ships' equipment and gear of every kind, sails, cordage, masts and spars, timber, all was wanting; the result of wholesale robbery rather than speculation. There was a huge deficit of provisions of every kind, already supplied and understood to be in store, waiting to be sent on board: casks of beef and pork, bags of biscuits, and so forth. According to the Parliamentary report on the Navy, issued as the result of an inquiry at the close of the war, the men in charge of some of the storehouses kept hogs in them and fed their hogs on the Navy biscuit, while "stores of different kinds and in large quantities had been taken out of the yards for sale, and everywhere intimidation or guilty complicity kept the knowledge of these abominations secret." As to the state of the ships in reserve at Chatham, while the *London* was one of them, we have this from an eyewitness: "Some of the decks were covered with filth, overgrown with grass and weeds, and in such a state that it required the use of shovels before they were deemed fit for the Commissioners to go on board." Things as a fact, take them all in all, were hardly worse in the days of Charles the Second.

In the House of Commons meanwhile, in that month of March, 1778, the Prime Minister openly stated in the course of a debate that the Navy was "never in greater strength."

Lord Sandwich also, from his place in the House of Lords, declared, as the constitutional head of

the Admiralty, that there were "thirty-five ships of the line ready for sea and fit for actual service at a moment's notice, and seven more in great forwardness, which would be ready in a fortnight." "I do not believe," Lord Sandwich had said, on the news of *Saratoga* reaching England, "that either France or Spain entertains any hostile disposition towards us . . . but I am authorised to affirm that our Navy is more than a match for those of the whole House of Bourbon." As a fact it took six months before even a proportion of the thirty-five were in a condition to face the enemy in battle. Admiral Keppel went down early in April to hoist his flag at Portsmouth on board the *Victory*—our present *Victory*, Nelson's future flagship. She had, however, not yet been able to get away from Chatham. "Instead of the 'noble fleet' he had been led to expect waiting for him at Spithead, there were only six ships of the line, and these only 'practically ready' for service; also a great scarcity of sailors, and an almost total deficiency of sea stores and provisions." So Keppel himself reported, disillusioned and alarmed at the prospect before him.

It was not until June, indeed, that Keppel was able to put to sea, and then with only twenty-one ships of the line in all, some of them in a very unsatisfactory state, "looked at," in Keppel's own phrase, "with a seaman's eye." He had to dismantle two of his older ships to provide for the needs of others in a better state of seaworthiness and wanted for other service. What followed is

common knowledge. Admiral Keppel on getting to sea found that the French were on the point of coming out from Brest with thirty-two ships of the line in the highest order. He had to return to Spithead and wait until nine more ships, some only sixty-fours, which the chance arrival of a fleet of Indiamen enabled the authorities to man at the last moment, had been hurriedly added to his force. When, under direct pressure from public opinion, he sailed once more, he was only able, with thirty ships in all to the enemy's thirty-two, to fight a drawn battle, with consequences of the gravest moment in deciding the attitude of Spain in regard to making an active alliance with France and the American colonists against England.

Ordered for sea on the 7th of April, while the *London* was fitting out in the Medway, this fine three-decker man-of-war, a new ship which had not yet left port, sprang a very serious leak. In common with most of the fleet, during the years that the *London* had been lying "in Ordinary," little attention had been paid to keeping her seaworthy: she had now to waste two months in dock while sound timbers were being put in below—two months during which Keppel, confronting the enemy with a force inferior to the French Brest fleet, was loudly demanding reinforcements. It was, in fact, not until November that the *London* was clear of the river. Christmas was past before she received her sailing orders, and she only arrived at Spithead on the eve of the Keppel court-martial.



The first entry of note in the *London's* log records her saluting Admiral Keppel's flag and cheering on its being rehoisted at the *Victory's* masthead after the admiral's triumphant acquittal. Another entry records the final hauling down of the flag, when Keppel, disgusted and furious at his treatment by Lord Sandwich, resigned his command and went ashore. "I trust your Majesty will see," wrote Admiral Keppel to the King, "my reputation cannot continue safe in hands who have done all they could to ruin it."

Admiral Sir Charles Hardy was appointed to the chief command of the "Western Squadron," as the Channel Fleet was officially styled, on the 19th of March, 1779, as Keppel's successor. Every other flag-officer of standing on the active list, practically, flatly refused to serve under Lord Sandwich, including men like Lord Howe and Admiral Barrington. Sir Charles Hardy was Governor of Greenwich Hospital, and he was drawn from his retirement to take the command. He was a veteran of much war service, but it was twenty years since he was last at sea, and he had never before held the chief command of a fleet. Admiral Hardy was in no sense a man of ability; but he sat in Parliament (for Plymouth), and voted on the Ministerial side, which to the First Lord of the Admiralty was good reason for employing him.

War with Spain, in addition to the existing war with France and the American colonists, was plainly in view during April and May, and efforts were made with feverish anxiety to reinforce the Western

Squadron. That, however, was not easy. In the prevailing conditions of dockyard malpractices and jobbery it was found impossible to cope with the situation. The outbreak of the Spanish War in June found England with just thirty-five ships of the line available for the fleet told off to defend home waters and face the Franco-Spanish combination. These, indeed, comprised all the ships that it was practicable to man and send to sea, and included every one of the seaworthy ships that England had left; as well as some that were unseaworthy.

The exigencies of the situation required, in addition to the Western Squadron, the distribution of British fleets and squadrons—numbering some fifty sail of the line altogether—all over the world: ten ships on the North American coast, thirty in the West Indies, eight in the East Indies. The Mediterranean for the time being was abandoned entirely. Minorca and Gibraltar (the siege of which began within a week of the Spanish declaration of war) had to shift for themselves until it might be possible to send ships to their relief.

A very disquieting disclosure was then made.

No fewer than twenty-seven of the ships that for years past had figured in the Navy List and House of Commons statements as efficient men-of-war were now officially admitted to be rotten hulks, which even Lord Sandwich dared not order to sea. The condemned vessels included, according to a Parliamentary return, three three-deckers, five seventy-

fours, and the rest seventy-gun ships, sixty-fours, and sixty-gun ships; among them one of the predecessors of our great *Dreadnought* of to-day.

France was known to have thirty-six sail of the line at Brest. Spain had between thirty and forty, all on this side of the Straits of Gibraltar and all in commission.

In the fighting line, indeed, of the British fleet actually on service at that moment, certain of the ships sent out with Sir Charles Hardy were known to be really unfit for sea. The *Royal George* was one. We all know the story of the *Royal George* upsetting at Spithead, but not all of us know why she really went to the bottom. No "land breeze shook the shrouds." The *Royal George* that morning was at anchor, bows-on to what breeze there was. Her bottom fell out while the ship was being heeled over in the ordinary way for "a small repair" just below the waterline. That was the sole cause of the disaster. Evidence at the subsequent court-martial, given by a survivor who was below and heard the timbers rend apart, proved that. Other witnesses—including an admiral—described her timbers and frame as so rotten that in places the wood would not hold the nails used to fasten on the copper sheathing. It was solely to avoid the fearful scandal that would have ensued, to escape the fierce outburst of national anger that must have flamed up from end to end of England at the discovery of the truth, that the Admiralty refused persistently to have the *Royal George* weighed up, although it was easily practic-

able. Contractors, indeed, repeatedly offered to do it for very little money.

Sir Charles Hardy was appointed Commander-in-Chief on the 19th of March, and ten days later the newspapers made the following officially inspired announcement :—

“The Grand Fleet preparing for sea will consist of forty-one sail of the line, in four divisions, amongst which will be three ships of 100 guns and six of 90 guns.”

On the 12th of May Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt took charge as Captain of the Fleet, and on the 17th Sir Charles Hardy arrived at Spithead and hoisted his flag on board the *Victory* as Commander-in-Chief.

What Hardy found at Portsmouth surprised him as much as the state of things there had surprised Keppel the year before. Instead of forty-one of the line, barely twenty-five were ready. In six months' time, so he was given to understand, he might hope to have under his orders thirty-five sail of the line, including sixty-fours. No more ships, however, were likely to be available for another three months after that.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This has to be said in regard to the ships not sent to sea. Even if it had been found possible to cobble some of them up for a summer cruise, there were no sailors to be got to man them. So urgent was the need for men in 1779 that the customary exemptions from impressment were withdrawn. “Men following callings under the protection of various statutes were suddenly kidnapped by the authority of Parliament and sent to the fleet by the pressgang. A Bill proposed late at night in a thin House and without notice, avowedly in order to surprise its victims, was made retrospective in its operation.



What the enemy—the French fleet in Brest—were doing, nobody in England knew. The Admiralty professed to be opposed, as a matter of policy, to sending frigates out to find out. “No benefit would be derived from doing so. Any frigate sent must pass Ushant, and signals would thereupon be made along the coast to Brest, and then ships would come out and drive the frigate off without having done anything.” Such was the official explanation given in Parliament.

As to impending trouble with Spain, nothing was known in England for certain of what was going on. Count d’Almadovar, the Spanish ambassador, was as cordial as usual to all comers. He was all smiles, and seemed more interested in his dinner parties and entertainments, which were the talk of

Even before it was proposed to Parliament orders had been given for a vigorous impressment without any regard to existing law. Every illegal act was to be made lawful; and men who had been seized in violation of statutes were deprived of the protection of a writ of Habeas Corpus.” “They were taken on the coast or seized on board merchant ships, like criminals; ships at sea were rifled of their crews, and left without sufficient hands to take them safely into port. Nay, we even find soldiers employed to assist the pressgangs, villages invested by a regular force, sentries standing with fixed bayonets, and churches surrounded during divine service, to seize seamen for the fleet. In vain did apprentices and landsmen claim exemption. They were ‘skulking seamen in disguise,’ or ‘would make good seamen at the first scent of salt water,’ and were carried off to the seaports. Altogether the authorities raised for the Navy in 1779—to a great extent in the autumn, when the gatherings of villagers in the harvest fields offered exceptional opportunities for pressgang raids—41,831 seamen and marines. On the other hand, the Desertions during the year, according to a return laid before Parliament, numbered 11,541; and Deaths, 4526; in addition to 551 men entered as ‘killed.’”

the town during May and the first part of June as surpassing anything of the kind seen in London for years. Yet all the time the Spanish ambassador had a post-dated declaration of war in his pocket. France and Spain had signed a treaty of alliance on the 12th of April, and had made plans for joining forces in the Channel to cover an invasion of England. France, in return for help from the Spanish fleet in the Channel, pledged herself not to lay down arms until the flag of Spain waved once more over both Minorca and Gibraltar. The Spanish ambassador, in point of fact, was only waiting to give time for the two fleets to rendezvous off Cape Finisterre, the appointed place of meeting. The 16th of June had been the day officially fixed for the concentration, and till then the courtly diplomatist deprecated all mention of "so terrible a calamity as a war between England and my country"! Those were his actual words. The hour for action struck. On the morning of the 16th Count d'Almadovar calmly waited on Lord Weymouth, the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and handed in his ultimatum, with a curt demand for his passports in the course of the afternoon.

That same morning Sir Charles Hardy, at the head of the Western Squadron, put to sea from St. Helens. It was at the very time that the Spanish ambassador was driving across to Downing Street.

In the fleet the *London* held the post of honour, as "second" ahead, or chief supporter, to the *Victory*, the flagship.

The admiral was aware that the situation with Spain was threatening, but, like everybody else, he knew little more. He received his first intimation that war had actually been declared when well at sea. On the 20th of the month the frigate *Southampton* ran into the fleet with an Admiralty despatch announcing the news. According to the latest intelligence, sent to Admiral Hardy from the Admiralty, the French fleet was still at Brest. Lord Sandwich and his colleagues were quite unaware that they had left that port on the 9th of June, and were already waiting on the appointed rendezvous off Corunna for the Spanish fleet to join.

The *London* and her consorts first stood across towards Ushant and cruised for some forty miles to westward of the island. They learnt on their own account while there that Brest harbour was empty. Beyond that nothing could be learnt. It proved impossible to discover the destination of the French fleet. Admiral Hardy kept sending out his fifty-gun ships and frigates on every side and overhauling every ship he met, but what had become of the Brest fleet nobody could or would say. Every day neutral merchantmen and French privateers were sighted, and the former stopped and questioned, but to little purpose. One or two ships which looked like French frigates were also from time to time seen on the horizon, apparently watching the British fleet, and ships were detached to cut them off, but the suspicious strangers always escaped. All the time not







a word came to hand of the whereabouts or the doings of the Spanish fleet.

On the 26th of June Hardy stood northward and cruised to the westward of the Scilly Isles. He remained at the mouth of the Channel until the 2nd of July, after which he turned back along the south coast of England, anchoring finally in Torbay. There he spent eight days, and then again, on the 16th of July, no wiser than when he arrived, he put to sea. Two more ships had joined him since he left St. Helens, making his total thirty-seven of the line.

Once more they crossed over to the neighbourhood of Ushant and patrolled to and fro in those waters for two or three days, seeing nothing and hearing not a word of the enemy. Back the fleet then went to the English coast to patrol between Rame Head, outside Plymouth Sound, and the Land's End, until the 11th of August.

To add to the gravity of the situation at that moment, alarmist reports of the most disquieting nature were rife all over England with regard to an immediate invasion from France. The menace was serious enough. Between forty and fifty thousand men, sixty battalions of infantry and forty squadrons of dragoons, with upwards of a hundred guns, stood massed along the coast of Normandy with transports ready collected at several points, only waiting for the appearance of the Combined Fleet to attempt a passage across to the Isle of Wight. The Duc de Broglie, Marshal of France,

the Commander-in-Chief, was in camp at Vaussieux, near Bayeux, daily expecting news of their arrival. The Comte de Vaux, with the main body of the army, was at Havre. De Rochambeau, Maréchal de Camp, at the head of the advanced guard division of picked troops, was at Dieppe. The official draft of his force, naming his battalions, and the transports they were to go on board of, their escorting ships, their squadrons, their distinguishing flags and the order of sailing, the various brigadiers and staff officers, the landing dispositions, and so forth, exists to-day. Any English visitor to Paris can see it, framed and displayed on the wall in one of the rooms of the Musée de la Marine at the Louvre.

The British fleet left the coast and moved out further west on the 12th of August, slowly working against a westerly wind which blew steadily day after day until the 19th, by which time they were well to the south-west of the Scilly Isles. Then the wind dropped and went round due east, making it impossible for Hardy to return into the Channel for the present. It was at this moment that the admiral received definite intelligence of the enemy, news of the most startling and alarming kind, which imperatively required his immediate presence off the English coast.

Between one and two on the afternoon of the 19th of August two strange sail, a ship of the line and a frigate, were sighted from the *London* and other ships, to windward, and standing for the British

fleet. They were soon seen to be friends, and the frigate ran up signals that she had urgently important news to communicate. At three o'clock she was alongside the *Victory*. The frigate proved to be the *Southampton* once more. Her captain informed Admiral Hardy that the French and Spanish fleets had joined and entered the Channel together in force. They numbered upwards of seventy sail of the line, and were cruising at that moment in the neighbourhood of the Eddystone, a hundred miles away.

Admiral Hardy at once made signals for all flag-officers to come on board the *Victory* for a Council of War, and for all the fleet to form in closer order of sailing.

Towards five o'clock the seventy-four, the *Marlborough*, joined company, and Captain Taylor Penny, the captain, gave the assembled Council of War yet more astonishing intelligence.

They had been chased by the Combined Fleet, he said, and very nearly captured. This was what had happened. Leaving Portsmouth on the 8th of the month as a reinforcement for the Western Squadron, on the 14th, when sixteen leagues to the south-east of Scilly, they made out a fleet in the south-west coming up Channel. They took it to be the British fleet, not imagining it could be anything else, and headed confidently towards it. As they neared they made the "private signal," but it was not answered. That puzzled them, as they thought they identified several of the ships in the fleet. Other unusual



circumstances enabled them to realize the true position, but only just in time. They turned back, making all sail, and ran for it.

Seven ships and two frigates chased them, but the *Marlborough* fortunately outsailed her pursuers. Next day Captain Penny met the *Isis* and *Southampton*, which had followed him from Portsmouth, and two sloops of war, one of which Captain Penny had sent back at once with a despatch for the Admiralty. The *Marlborough* then resumed her course until, when off the Dodman Point, on the coast of Cornwall, they sighted the enemy again. They were again chased until near the Eddystone. The *Isis* was chased right round into Plymouth Sound. The *Marlborough* and *Southampton* stood off to the south. They did not lose sight of their pursuers till the afternoon of the 17th. After that, making a wide sweep westward, they held on safely until they met the Western Squadron.

Of what was happening in the Channel or on the shore, beyond what Captain Penny of the *Marlborough* told the admiral, and intelligence brought by the frigates *Ambuscade* and *Milford* on the 21st that "the enemy were still in the Channel," nobody in the British fleet had the least idea for another week. Then a cutter, the *Tapageuse*, came in direct from Plymouth. They heard from her a yet more amazing, and a bitterly humiliating, story.

The enemy, they heard, had shown themselves off Plymouth Sound on the 16th and had anchored their frigates off Cawsand Bay, sinking the poor

fishermen's boats right and left. They had chased the *Isis* into the Hamoaze and captured the *Ardent*, a sixty-four, almost within sight of Plymouth Hoe, some nine miles to the eastward of the Eddystone. On shore all was panic and unreadiness, complete and universal. The place was defenceless; there were guns—two hundred and more on the Citadel ramparts and in the batteries, but most of the shot in the magazine were of the wrong size, too big for the guns. Also there were practically no gunners to man them—only thirty-five old men, mostly infirm artillery pensioners, or “invalids.”

“There were guns and shot,” as the Duke of Richmond related later to the House of Lords, “but neither the one nor the other answered; all pieces of what are called small stores were totally wanting: there were neither handspikes to work the guns or give them the necessary direction, nor wadding, rammers, sponges—not, in short, any one part of the apparatus fit to meet an enemy.” There were only four regiments of militia in the neighbourhood—not a single regular. And the poor militiamen were in a bad way. “Even flints for supplying the muskets,” wrote Sir N. Wraxall, “however incredible the fact may appear, were deficient.” Drake's Island was held by a party of guardship sailors hastily sent off to fortify and occupy it. Three condemned hulks, the *Téméraire*, the *Chichester*, and the *St. Ann*, gunned in a hurry with twenty-four pounders, were hauled down from their last moorings and anchored as floating batteries

to bar the passage into the Hamoaze. An emergency party of volunteers threw up earthworks along the crest of the Hoe. Some old ships' guns from the gunwharf were mounted to defend the Cattewater. Over a hundred of the finest oaks on Mount Edgcumbe were cut down to form a ten-gun battery over there. According to a sarcastic story that went the round of the London papers, Commissioner Ourry sent off a courier with a message to Lord Sandwich: "Shall I burn His Majesty's Dockyard, or wait till the French admiral comes in and does it?"

Plymouth's last hour seemed at hand, when, quite inexplicably as it seemed to the people on shore, the enemy hesitated and then moved off down Channel. One boatload of Frenchmen landed near Maker, but no more. Of the landing party, most were knocked on the head, and the rest captured hiding in a cornfield.

Why the Combined Fleet did not make use of its opportunity did not come out for long afterwards. All unsuspected on the British side, the enemy were themselves in a very difficult position indeed.

Admiral the Comte d'Orvilliers, the French Commander-in-Chief, was aware, in a general way, of the poor condition of the Plymouth defences; although, of course, he could hardly anticipate the hopeless disorganization and deficiency of the *personnel* that existed ashore. As a fact, he had with him on board his flagship a French officer who

within the past few months had been all over the Plymouth defences as a spy, and had been able, thanks to the lax methods of the garrison, to see and take note of almost every detail. But he hesitated to strike the decisive blow. He was unaware as yet of the whereabouts of Admiral Hardy's fleet. With that hostile force at large, inferior though it was, he dared not commit himself. So, indeed, he told his Spanish allies, who were pressing for a landing and an immediate attack on Plymouth.

D'Orvilliers also had no pilots for the Sound. Some were to have been sent him from St. Malo, but they had not arrived.

The whole fleet, too, was dangerously short of men. There was an epidemic in the Spanish fleet, and the men were dying like flies. It had spread throughout the command, and half the French crews were on the sick list. The *Ville de Paris* had 560 men sick out of 1100 on the books. The *Intrépide* had 580 sick, and had lost 70 by death, out of 700 on board the ship when they sailed; the *Auguste* had 500 sick out of 800 men on board; the *Actif* had over 400 sick; the *Caton*, *Palmier*, *Destin*, and *Alexandre* had each over 300 sick. There was not a ship that had fewer than 200. "So many dead sailors were flung into the sea," says a letter written from Plymouth later in the year, "that the inhabitants have eat no fish for a month."

Besides that they were short of provisions. They had been hurried out of Brest before they were really ready; the Spaniards had been seven weeks late in



joining, the French meanwhile remaining at sea. Then the victuallers that D'Orvilliers should have found waiting off Torbay had never arrived. Some of the ships were out of fresh water, existing from day to day on the generosity of other ships sailing near by in the line, from which they sent to borrow a cask or two at a time.

He was thus by no means in a position to attack Plymouth, even had he been assured in regard to Admiral Hardy. The luck of war was on the side of England off Plymouth that month of August, 1779; a series of accidental conditions saved the place.

The French admiral was yet further hampered by contradictory orders from home. He had sailed with explicit instructions to join the Spaniards and then destroy Portsmouth and seize the Isle of Wight. After that the Combined Fleet was to cover the crossing of the French army of invasion of forty thousand men, which was waiting under arms on the coast of Normandy, in camp at Havre and St. Malo. Those were the Comte d'Orvilliers' original sailing orders. As he neared the English Channel a totally different set of orders was forwarded to D'Orvilliers. He was now instructed to blockade Plymouth instead, and occupy Falmouth harbour. That was to be his new base, while the army of invasion, escorted by a detached squadron, would now land away in the West of England. But it was late in the year for an invasion, and Falmouth Bay was too much exposed in case of stormy weather.

The Comte d'Orvilliers in the circumstances found himself at a loss what to do. He wrote out his objections to the new plan and sent them to Versailles by a fast frigate; and then he waited off Plymouth for ten days, cruising between there and the Lizard, causing the wildest anxiety in England for the safety of Hardy's fleet. After that he heard more definitely where the British admiral was, and at once called a Council of War. The Council decided to go westward and give battle to the English. They would trust for success to their numbers—sixty-six of the line to thirty-seven or thirty-nine, as the English were reported to be.

An east wind, too, had set in, which was slowly forcing the Combined Fleet down Channel, and daily nearer to Sir Charles Hardy's cruising ground, believed to be some eighty miles to the south-west of Scilly.

On the British side, the news that the enemy were coming their way first reached the *London* and her consorts early on the morning of the 30th of August. They were at that moment some fifteen miles to the south of the Scilly Isles. It had taken them over a week to get so far, working up against the east wind. During that time, nearly every day, strange sail in twos and threes, and on the 27th a squadron of ten ships altogether, were from time to time reported by cruisers ahead, but nothing of the enemy in force was seen from the main body until the morning of the 30th. The *London* and the rest of

the British battle squadron meanwhile kept steadily standing to the eastward, continually "exercising great guns and small arms," as the logs note, and "keeping in close order of sailing."

The weather was thick at times, and on no occasion was it possible to see—from the main fleet, at any rate—any distance ahead.

The van squadron of the British fleet was in charge of Rear-Admiral Darby, who had his flag on board the *Britannia*. The centre squadron was headed by the historic *Royal George*. With it sailed the *London*, at her post immediately in advance of the *Victory*. Astern of the *Victory*, as the flagship's corresponding supporter astern, came the famous *Foudroyant*, Captain John Jervis, the great Earl St. Vincent of after days. They sailed in three lines, frigates ahead and on either flank, with two cables length (four hundred yards) between the ships in line. The total force, according to the flagship's log, numbered thirty-seven of the line, three fifty-gun ships, nine frigates, and two sloops, five cutters and five fireships.

The enemy at that moment numbered thirty French ships of the line, thirty-six Spaniards, and a score of smaller vessels.

Early on the morning of the 30th the enemy were reported in sight from on board the *Victory*. "At 7 a.m.," says the *Victory's* log, "saw 16 sail of large ships between S.S.E. and E.S.E., which we suppose to be part of the Combined Fleet." At three o'clock the *Royal George* and the *Cumberland* reported twenty-

eight strange sail on the starboard bow to the south-east. Records the *London's* log : " At 6 a Signal for a Fleet to windward ; discovered the Enemy's Fleet and cleared ship for action. The signal to form in close order of sailing and for all cruizers to come into the Fleet. At 8, form'd line of battle at 2 cables length asunder."

Next morning early, when they were about twelve miles south-west of the Lizard, six sail of the enemy were made out in the haze, not far off to the south-east. Again the flag-officers met in council of war. At eight o'clock it cleared a little, and one of the enemy's ships was discovered so near that from the fleet they made out plainly that she was flying " a flag, half red half white, at the mizen peak." The fireships with the fleet were now ordered to be taken in tow. Two of our ships, the *Romney* and *Milford*, were at the same time sent off to close and reconnoitre the enemy ; but four ships, two under French colours, bore down on them, and they were recalled. At one o'clock in the afternoon eleven sail of the enemy were reported. Soon afterwards it came on so thick that the whole fleet brought-to for twelve hours.

Resuming their course at midnight, at one o'clock on the morning of the 1st of September " the *Duke* made signal for a fleet in the S.W." " At 5 a.m.," notes the *Victory*, " from the main mast head saw 60 sail to S.W.S. Took to be the Combined Fleet." The enemy kept within sight all day, on the horizon all the time. They came no nearer, however, con-



tent apparently with dogging the *London* and her consorts as they proceeded. All that the Combined Fleet did was to chase off various English frigates that from time to time tried to approach and count their numbers. During that afternoon this unpleasant affair was recorded: "Observed the headmost of the enemy's frigates take an English sloop." At half-past five in the evening, according to the *Victory*, "Thirty ships of the enemy in sight from the mast head, astern." There was again a council of flag-officers on board the *Victory* during the day.

Next morning, the 2nd of September, the enemy were again in sight to the westward. The British fleet was by then past the Lizard, and heading up Channel towards the Eddystone. At eleven o'clock the fleet was within four miles of the Eddystone, whereupon, on the tide turning against him, Admiral Hardy let go anchor until half-past three in the afternoon. On the tide beginning to flow again Sir Charles weighed and continued his course up Channel. Seven sail of the enemy were now in sight, right astern on the horizon to the south-west. That proved to be the last seen of the Combined Fleet.

On the morning of the 3rd of September no hostile sail was in sight. Ahead of them to the north-east loomed the Bill of Portland. Between noon and two in the afternoon they had rounded St. Catherine's Point, in the Isle of Wight, and were shaping their course in for Spithead. There, just at sunset, they

anchored, and the humiliating performance of the retreat of the Channel Fleet was accomplished.

It had proved a bitter and keenly felt humiliation for all concerned. Officers and seamen alike angrily resented having to take part in so discreditable and unwonted a business. Some of the finest captains that the British Navy ever had, commanded ships in the Western Squadron—men like John Jervis of the *Foudroyant* (in later days the famous Earl St. Vincent), Adam Duncan of the *Monarch* (the future victor of Camperdown), Samuel Pitchford Cornish of the *London*, John Macbride, Sir John Lockhart Ross, Sir Richard Bickerton, Samuel Cranston Goodall, Kempenfelt (the Captain of the Fleet), John Laforey, John Simmonds.

Wrote Captain Jervis in a letter to his sister: "I am in the most humbled state of mind ever experienced, for the retreat we have made before the Combined Fleet all yesterday and all this morning." Duncan spoke afterwards of his personal "indignation and shame at being unable to do more than stand looking over the stern gallery of the *Monarch*."

On board two of the ships, indeed, the men's open disgust was shown in a curious way. Says a letter from Major L. Floyd, of the *Victory's* marines, to Lord Herbert, now among the manuscripts of the Earl of Pembroke at Wilton House: "The British Fleet fled before the enemy and the seamen hung

their hammocks before the *Victory's* head that she might not see such days." On board the *Royal George*, according to a story that appeared in one of the newspapers, this happened. "As they were retreating a bo'sun's mate stepped over the *Royal George's* bows and lashed his hammock round the head of the figure (King George the Second). 'What are you doing there?' called out an officer on the forecastle. 'Only securing his peepers, sir!' answered Jack. 'Peepers! d—n you, what d'ye mean?' bawled the bo'sun. 'Why,' answered the man, 'we ain't ordered to break the old boy's heart, are we? I'm sure, if he was once to turn and see this day's work, not all the patience in Heaven would hold him a minute longer!'"

Sir Charles Hardy, for his part, took this view. Speaking from his place in the House of Commons in the following December, as one of the speakers in reply to the attack by the Opposition on the Admiralty for mismanagement of the whole campaign, and the shame they had brought on England in consequence of the retreat before the enemy of the Western Squadron, he put forward this as his own personal explanation. He offered the enemy battle, he said, and kept his course in order to draw them higher up the Channel, where he might engage them to the greatest advantage in case of accident, and where too, if they had been defeated, their defeat would have proved most fatal to them. He took it on himself to affirm, said Sir Charles, whatever other gentlemen might affect to believe,

that the British fleet was far from being disgraced by that manœuvre. The disgrace rested on the combined fleet of the enemy, who, being in possession of an apparent superiority of force, declined to come to battle when offered.

Kempfenfelt, Hardy's flag-captain—a naval officer of the very highest ability and skill, who unfortunately never got his fair chance—took a very similar view. “Much, I may say all, depends upon this fleet,” were words that he wrote. Its duty, according to Kempfenfelt, was, in the circumstances, to avoid action, except on its own terms; “to hover near the enemy, keep him at bay, and prevent him attempting anything.” That, claimed Kempfenfelt, siding with his admiral on the main question, they had practically done. Whether, in certain respects, a bolder and more skilful leader might have made a better show and managed things more creditably was another matter. Kempfenfelt was no admirer of his chief's handling of the fleet, as others of his letters plainly show.

Admiral Hardy could not have known, asserted Lord North, the Prime Minister, speaking for the Government and the Admiralty, the undermanned and sickly condition of the Combined Fleet. Lord North went so far, indeed, as to extol Sir Charles Hardy's “sagacity.” It would have been “imprudent,” he declared, “to have engaged the enemy under almost insuperable disadvantages, only to surprise the world with acts of British valour. Had the Admiral known the condition of the Combined



Fleet then, as well as everybody did now, he would not have declined engaging them." The Government had their majority in the division, and the matter ended there.<sup>1</sup>

The fleet arrived to find Portsmouth in a state of feverish anxiety and apprehension. The whole place, as a fact, on the fleet being first reported, became panic-stricken, actually taking Hardy's fleet for the enemy. Numbers of the townsfolk hurried off with their families in carts to seek refuge inland at Winchester and Petersfield. The naval authorities possibly knew better who the strangers were, but they did not say so, and everybody else was suffering badly from nerves. Portsmouth fully expected attack. They had been warned from the Admiralty to expect an attack, and had also heard exaggerated accounts of the doings of the enemy off the Devon coast.

This was the state of the Portsmouth defences at that moment. Afloat, a most elaborate series of arrangements had been made to protect the harbour and dockyard. Look-out vessels had been posted beyond Calshot and towards Portland on one side, and off St. Helens on the other, specially to signal the first approach of the enemy. A sixty-four-gun

<sup>1</sup> Owing to the huge majority that Lord North's party commanded in Parliament, the Ministry were able to vote down all criticisms, however well founded. Party before Patriotism was the maxim of the House of Commons—for those who sat on the Speaker's right.

ship, the *Arrogant*, lay at the Needles to bar the passage into the Solent, together with half a dozen old transports, under her orders, laden with stones and prepared for scuttling right across the fairway. A fifty-gun ship was anchored off South-sea Castle; and a number of anchors of the largest size were also got ready in the dockyard, to be taken out in lighters and dropped overboard to close the passage opposite the Castle with a barrier of *chevaux de frise*. A guardship was also anchored at Stokes Bay, as well as one at Spithead, both sixty-fours. Boarding-nettings were specially supplied them to be triced up every night. Boats were told off on a given signal to go out to each of the buoys and cut it adrift. Henry the Eighth's rusty old chain across the mouth of Portsmouth harbour, opposite Block-house Point, was dragged up and got into working order, new capstans being set up on the beach. On land, at the same time, there had been awkward discoveries at Portsmouth, just as there had been at Plymouth. One was that the Woolwich Arsenal people had supplied 32-pounder cannon-balls for the 24-pounder guns on the ramparts—balls too big to go into the bore of the guns.

The latest news at Portsmouth was of the taking of the *Ardent*, a ship that had left Portsmouth only four days before her capture, and also that Admiral Hardy had fought a battle with the enemy, reported to be a hundred sail and more. Coasters brought in that story. It had been a night battle, they said: they had heard the cannonade and seen the flashes of

the firing. The result, however, they had not stopped for.

On land equally elaborate precautions were taken. Anticipating a descent by French troops, the moat round the fortifications was cleared and filled from the sea. Arrangements were also made to pull down all houses within gunshot of the walls, the occupants of which were officially warned to be ready to quit at a moment's notice. A volunteer corps of town-folk was raised "to learn the manual exercise in order to do duty on the works in case of an attack." There were no regulars nearer than Coxheath camp, near Maidstone, in Kent. Four militia regiments formed the Portsmouth garrison. A detachment of horse-grenadiers and foot-guards from London was, however, expected. Old naval pensioners and convalescents from Haslar Hospital, with volunteers from an Indiaman at the Motherbank, manned Blockhouse fort.

The officers and men of the *London* and her consorts of the Western Squadron had themselves one experience of the general nervousness at Portsmouth about the Combined Fleet, within two days of their arrival. Between eight and nine o'clock on Sunday evening, the 5th of September, the cutters stationed on the look-out beyond St. Helens, off Culver Cliff, suddenly began firing alarm guns. The next moment the beacons on Afton Down and other high ridges in the Isle of Wight flared up. The alarm was taken up instantly by the *London* and the rest of the ships at Spithead. All beat to quarters and cleared

for action in hot haste. The garrison of Portsmouth at the same moment turned out *en masse* and stood to arms; the militia on Southsea Common and on the shores of Stokes Bay; the volunteers, and the battalion of Chelsea Hospital "invalids" or out-pensioners, forming the normal fortress garrison, along the ramparts all round. Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty, who had hurried down to Portsmouth to consult with Charles Hardy, stayed up on the King's Bastion all night.

Nothing, however, was seen of the Combined Fleet, and after midnight a frigate was despatched from Spithead to reconnoitre. She returned at daybreak. There had never, she reported, been any enemy at all. What the cutter that fired the first alarm gun had taken for the Franco-Spanish fleet had been some victuallers from Cork and some coasters, coming round from Plymouth under escort of the *Wolf* sloop-of-war. That was all. So the scare ended. As a fact, at the time of the alarm the Combined Fleet were outside the Channel, beyond the Land's End, between two and three hundred miles away.

No more, indeed, was seen of the Combined Fleet in English waters. On the 5th of September they were on the point of going back home. Part of the French contingent, in fact, had already parted company for Brest. The rest all followed within a week, after which the Spaniards made their way to Ferrol and Cadiz, and the dispersal was complete.

There was an autumn cruise to Torbay and back



for the Western Squadron, after which it returned to port for the winter on the 25th of November. So the Channel campaign of 1779 closed.

The *London* was withdrawn from service in home waters shortly afterwards. She was put under orders to proceed to join the fleet on the North America station at New York, flying the flag of Rear-Admiral Graves, who had been appointed second in command.

#### XIV

### FLAGSHIP WHEN AMERICA WAS LOST

**A**N event of momentous import for the world at large comes at this point into the *London's* story.

May, 1780, saw the *London* as one of a squadron of six ships of the line making her way across the Atlantic. They started with the hope of overtaking a French squadron of seven of the line and four frigates which had just sailed, carrying out six thousand picked French regulars, under De Rochambeau, intended to take the field with Washington and Lafayette.

The French, however, had a long start of Admiral Graves, and they kept their lead. Arriving off the coast, they evaded the small British squadron in North American waters which was watching for them, and seizing Rhode Island, occupied Newport in force, where the French ships anchored in security behind the harbour batteries and landed the troops they carried. When, during July, the *London* and her consorts arrived on the scene, all that could be done was to reinforce the Commander-in-Chief on the station, Vice-Admiral Marriott Arbuthnot, and set

on foot a blockade to keep the French where they were. The British fleet available numbered altogether ten ships of the line: one ninety-eight-gun ship, the *London*, five seventy-fours, and four sixty-fours. They had a local superiority over the enemy for the time being, putting it out of the power of the French expedition to do mischief either by sea or land.

Command of the sea across the Atlantic meant everything at that moment to the successful prosecution of the war. The British military forces in North America were divided into separate armies: one under Sir Henry Clinton, the Commander-in-Chief, operating round New York; the second under Lord Cornwallis, carrying out a campaign on its own account in Virginia. It was only possible to get from one to the other or keep up communication by sea—the country between being difficult and overrun by rebel colonists. While the British fleet, with its frigates cruising along the coast to keep the line of communication open, had the mastery at sea, Clinton and Cornwallis remained in touch, and were free to co-operate in the general scheme of operations. Washington's allies at Rhode Island could not interfere. The powerful French fleet in the West Indies was at the same time held in check by Rodney. For the moment also the Franco-Spanish naval combination in European waters was occupied in covering the siege operations against Gibraltar and making demonstrations to paralyse the movements of the British Channel Fleet.

For the North American Fleet it was all-important to muzzle Newport : to keep the six thousand French regulars in Rhode Island from throwing their weight into the balance against either Clinton or Cornwallis. They did their work, and not unsatisfactorily.

The *London* took her part in keeping watch over Rhode Island from July, 1780, all through the following autumn and winter. The British base of operations was in Gardiner's Bay, at the north end of Long Island. It was a hard and trying task, carried out amid inhospitable and tempestuous surroundings. And at the same time life afloat, from all accounts, was not rendered any easier by Admiral Arbuthnot's personal peculiarities—the admiral's rough and overbearing methods and brutal irritability of temper. Arbuthnot had an unenviable notoriety throughout the service of his day, as a hard man to deal with, a dull-witted, narrow-minded martinet of a peculiarly savage temper and of harsh and tyrannical disposition. A man of the ruffianly stamp of Smollett's Captain Oakum in *Roderick Random*, not many men in the Navy had a good word for Admiral Arbuthnot ; and what has since then come to light about him makes his portrait still less attractive.

While those on board ship off Newport were groaning under the yoke of hard duty, made harder still by the bullying of a curmudgeonly leader, the enemy they were watching were having, from all accounts, an excellent time on shore as the guests of the United States.

“ The unpublished memorials of that time and



place," says an American writer, "contain many delightful recollections of the charming manners of the French officers: of the Rochambeaus, father and son; of the Duc de Deux-Ponts, afterwards King of Bavaria; of the Prince de Broglie, guillotined in the Revolution; of the Swedish Count Fersen, 'the Adonis of the camp,' who afterwards acted as coachman for the French king and queen in their escape from Paris; of the Vicomte de Noailles; and of Admiral de Ternay, the latter buried in Trinity churchyard in Newport. There are old houses in that city which still retain upon their window-panes the gallant inscriptions of those picturesque days, and there are old letters and manuscripts that portray their glories. One describes the young noblemen driving into the country upon parties of pleasure, preceded by their running footmen—a survival of feudalism—tall youths in kid slippers and with leaping-poles; another describes the reception of Washington by the whole French garrison in March, 1781. It was a brilliant scene. The four French regiments were known as Bourbonnais, Soissonnais, Deux-Ponts, and Santonge; they contained each a thousand men, and the cavalry troop, under de Lauzun, was almost as large. Some of these wore white uniforms, with yellow or violet or crimson lapels, and with black gaiters; others had a uniform of black and gold, with gaiters of snowy white. The officers displayed stars and badges; even the officers' servants were gay in gold and silver lace. Over them all, and over the whole town,

floated the white flag of the Bourbons with the *fleur-de-lys*. They were drawn up in open ranks along the avenue leading to the long wharf which was just then losing its picturesque old name, 'Queen's Hithe.' This gay army, whose fresh uniforms and appointments contrasted strangely with the worn and dilapidated aspect of the Continental troops, received Washington with the honours due to a Marshal of France."

Washington's review, as a fact, was the prelude to the first move by the French at Newport. Washington had not gone to Newport merely to hold a review and take the French salute in person. He had planned to open the spring campaign forthwith by an energetic attack on the British forces in Virginia, and wanted the battalions of French regulars to stiffen his colonial levies. It was arranged that two thousand French soldiers should be landed in the Chesapeake as soon as possible.

The fortune of events also, as things happened just at that moment, favoured the enterprise. During February, 1781, a destructive storm wrecked one of Admiral Arbuthnot's best seventy-fours, the *Culloden*, and dismasted another, the *Bedford*. It was too good a chance to lose, and, shipping the soldiers rapidly, the entire French man-of-war squadron at Newport put to sea and ran the blockade.

They were seen, however, before they were many hours out, and the news was quickly carried to Gardiner's Bay. Admiral Arbuthnot had at least his remaining ships in serviceable order, and he followed

within two days of the French making their start. He had information of their probable destination, and was able to intercept them outside the Chesapeake estuary just as they were heading in for the Capes of Virginia.

The enemy numbered seven French ships to eight British, and with them on the open sea a good opportunity offered for striking a telling blow. Unfortunately the admiral's confused and puzzling tactics threw the game away. Arbuthnot wasted the forenoon in formal and pedantic manoeuvres to gain the weather gage. Towards two o'clock he hoisted the flag for battle and opened his attack; but he attacked the enemy in such a manner that his three leading ships found themselves confronted by, and under close fire from, the whole of the French squadron, they themselves being temporarily isolated, in a position where the remainder of the British ships could do little to render them assistance. Before their consorts, the *London* among them, could take part in the battle, the French fire had dismasted the three leading British ships. On that, as Arbuthnot and the main body came up, the French neatly sheered off and moved away. They quietly dropped down to leeward, and brought-to and re-formed line, as it were defiantly challenging the British admiral to repeat his attack. But the smashing up of the three van ships had altered the situation entirely. Arbuthnot now had left only five ships in a fit state for battle. The French on their side had suffered some losses in men, but all

seven of their ships were practically intact, in fair fighting trim. Baffled and baulked, Admiral Arbuthnot declined further fighting for the present. He sullenly drew off and made his way into the Chesapeake and anchored there. There, at any rate, he would be in a position to support and cover the British troops operating on shore.

To that extent the British admiral had the advantage for the day. On seeing Arbuthnot's move, the French admiral gave up the idea of attempting to reach the river. Instead of forcing on a second battle, or landing his troops, he abandoned the original plan entrusted to him, and turned back and made sail for Rhode Island again. Arbuthnot, for his part content with the way things had finally shaped themselves, did not pursue. He stayed for some time in the Chesapeake, and then returned leisurely to Gardiner's Bay and resumed his blockade of Newport. So things went until in June letters of recall reached Admiral Arbuthnot from England.

The *London*, for her part in the encounter, had little opportunity of doing more than firing a few long-range shots as the enemy drew off to leeward. Her post was the fifth ship from the head of the line, and she was only able to get into action as the French began to move away to their second position. Three men were wounded on board, and a topsail-yard was shot away.

Admiral Arbuthnot's departure made the *London* flagship on the station. The new admiral had not long to wait for the first foreshadowing of the tre-



mendous event that was at hand. The ship taking the late Commander-in-Chief home was not out of sight, when an officer arrived on board the *London* with news that put a new and startling, and a very serious complexion indeed on the situation.

Arbuthnot sailed for England on the 2nd of July. That same afternoon intercepted French despatches were placed in Admiral Graves' hands. They indicated that it was the enemy's intention to detach a strong division from Admiral De Grasse's fleet in the West Indies and send it north during the "Hurricane months"—August and September—to enforce the raising of the blockade of Newport, and then take part in a general attack by land and sea on the British forces at New York. Admiral Graves at once sent the papers off to Rodney at Antigua. In the meantime he put to sea with his whole fleet, to cruise in the neighbourhood of Newport, in order to be at hand to intercept an important convoy of naval stores from France, known to be due shortly at Boston.

While Admiral Graves' letters were hastening south to Rodney, other letters sent by Rodney to put Admiral Graves in turn on his guard were on their way north to New York. One of Rodney's frigates, the *Nymphe*, had seen De Grasse's fleet leave Martinique and head north, and had also learnt that the enemy's destination in the first place was San Domingo. Rodney, from this news and from other information, guessed what the French admiral had in mind, and directed Sir Samuel Hood, his

second in command, to hold himself ready to proceed to New York with the greater part of the fleet. Rodney himself, unfortunately, was very ill, and about to go home on leave, taking with him certain ships which were in urgent need of dockyard repairs.

Rodney foresaw danger ahead for the squadron off the American coast, but he hardly realized the full intention of the tremendous stroke that had been planned.

As has been said, the British forces fighting the colonials were widely divided: one army at New York, the other in North Carolina and Virginia. They could only communicate by sea, and relied for all their warlike supplies on the capability of the local fleet to command the sea. De Grasse's fleet and the entire American army with its French allies, in accordance with the new plan of campaign outlined in the early summer by Washington and Rochambeau at Rhode Island, were to combine against one of the two English armies, cut it off from the other by temporarily seizing the local command of the sea, and then overwhelm it under a land attack *en masse* by the concentrated forces of the Americans collected from all over the theatre of war and all the French troops across the Atlantic. De Grasse, it was planned, was to bring north the whole of the French fleet in the West Indies, twenty-five sail of the line, pick up three or four fresh ships of the line, expected with the next convoy from France,

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off San Domingo or at Havana, and then join forces at sea with the seven sail of the line at Newport, who received orders to run or force the blockade on a given date. That, it was calculated, would make up a total force of thirty-six of the line, a combination vastly superior to anything that England was likely to have at or near the spot. Between three and four thousand troops, collected from the West Indian garrisons, were to be carried on board De Grasse's fleet; and the Newport squadron also would have on board all the French troops belonging to that division which had not yet managed to join Washington in the field—three to four thousand men.

New York, and Clinton's army round there, was first named as the object of attack. Then the plan was changed. Clinton, it was now designed, was to be held in check by a small containing force, while, instead of dealing with him, the entire Franco-American concentration hurled itself in force on Cornwallis and his army in Virginia, which had its base at Yorktown, near the mouth of the Chesapeake.

Meanwhile, neither Graves nor Clinton at New York, nor Cornwallis and his officers, not one of them, had the smallest idea of what was coming.

As finally decided on, De Grasse, the furthest off from the scene of action, had to make the first move. The Newport squadron also had their appointed day to go to sea. Washington, at that time fronting Clinton, was to threaten New York until he

learnt that De Grasse was on the coast. Then, with all secrecy possible, and all swiftness, Washington was to make the grand move, cross the Delaware, and with 8000 men (6000 Americans and 2000 French) join the 6000 odd under Lafayette, who for some weeks previously had been taking up the attention of Cornwallis in Virginia. Let them once join hands and my Lord Cornwallis's campaigning was over! Barred from relief by sea by De Grasse's huge fleet of thirty-six men-of-war, concentrated off the entrance to the Chesapeake, and assailed on land by 20,000 troops, all under Washington's personal direction, how could Cornwallis and his 5000 men hope to hold out?

The wresting from England of the command of the sea in the North Atlantic was the first objective, the mainspring of the entire movement and combination. On it all hinged; and to secure it every nerve was strained on the side of the enemy.

On the English side, things shaped themselves during those fateful weeks after this fashion.

Rodney handed over the command to Hood on the 31st of July, and started for home on the next day. He left Hood with fourteen sail of the line, having been given to understand that De Grasse, after seeing to the regulation escorts for his homeward-bound trade convoys, numbering, the merchantmen, nearly two hundred vessels, and due to sail very shortly, would not have more than fourteen or



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fifteen ships of the line available to send to America. De Grasse further, according to Rodney's information, was himself returning to France. Two of Rodney's ships which were escorting the Jamaica convoy to Port Royal were to follow Hood, with others that Admiral Parker at Jamaica was instructed to send. Graves had eight or nine sail of the line at New York, as Rodney believed. Made up in this way, the admiral calculated that there would be on the North American station at an early date some twenty-five British ships of the line, probably, indeed, thirty, when in September Admiral Digby arrived from England with reinforcements. The enemy, counting in the eight ships at Newport, could not have, according to Rodney's intelligence, more, at most, than twenty-two sail of the line. So he felt little anxiety at allowing the ships of his original fleet, most in want of an overhaul, to proceed home at once with the various convoys and with himself.

A deeper game than Rodney imagined possible had, however, been planned by De Grasse. He collected his convoys for France from all over the West Indies at Cap François, in San Domingo, now Cape Haitien. Then he directed that all should stand fast there until further orders. Not a single merchantman should leave for France until the man-of-war fleet had returned from North America in the autumn. The ships of war that in ordinary circumstances would have escorted the convoys across the Atlantic would accompany him north as part of the fighting line. Such were the orders issued by De

Grasse. That stroke added ten sail of the line to the numbers that Rodney had allowed the French. Also three powerful eighty-gun ships from France arrived at Cap François, having come over as escort to the outward-bound West Indian convoy. Thus Rodney was still further out in his calculations at the outset by, in all, thirteen ships. At the same time, upsetting Rodney's figures yet more, the British admiral in command at Jamaica kept back Rodney's two ships, sent as escort to the Port Royal convoy, from following Hood, retaining them on his own authority to assist in the defence of Port Royal, which was not at that moment threatened. He declined also to part with a single ship of his command to reinforce the North American station, as Rodney had suggested.

And, furthermore, Sir Samuel Hood, when at length he joined Admiral Graves, was destined to find the balance against England more adverse still from yet another cause.

De Grasse made his start from Havana in the second week of August, making directly for the Chesapeake.

Hood, on his side, was already on the move. He had had intelligence of the French leaving San Domingo, and had put to sea a day or two before. In accordance with his instructions from Rodney, Hood also was making for the Chesapeake, expecting to find Admiral Graves and the *London* and the greater part of the command waiting for him off the Capes of Virginia.

Rodney, as the senior British admiral across the Atlantic, had instructed Graves to join Hood there. The united fleets were then to intercept De Grasse as he neared his destination and overpower him before he could be joined by the ships from Newport. Rodney to the end was under his original false impression as to the force with which the enemy quitted the West Indies. The French at Newport, it had been hoped in addition, would still be held fast by a show of force from Graves' remaining ships of the line and his frigates.

No Graves, however, met Hood. Not even a frigate from his squadron was on the coast.

On the other hand, there was as yet no sign of De Grasse. Not a French flag was seen by any of Hood's ships all through the cruise. And on shore, in the direction of the army at Yorktown, all for the time being looked quiet.

De Grasse, indeed, for purposes of concealment, was coming by the little-frequented Old Bahama Channel. He was just three days astern of Hood.

Admiral Graves, for his part, was at that moment at New York, having his ships overhauled in the British dockyard there. He had not long returned from his cruise off Boston, and there was a big list of repairs to be attended to. Graves, moreover, was in absolute ignorance of Hood's coming; nor was he yet aware that De Grasse was on the move.

Rodney had sent him details and instructions in

regard to everything, as far as that admiral had been able to discover, concerning the enemy's movements; but, as things turned out, not a word had reached Admiral Graves. Two despatches, sent by separate vessels, had both miscarried. They had been sent off, one before Rodney left the West Indies, the second by Hood just before he started. When he set out Rodney had an idea in his mind that the cooler climate of the North Atlantic might reinvigorate him and restore his health sufficiently to enable him to proceed in person to New York to assume the direction of affairs there and personally lead Graves' fleet to rendezvous with Hood off the coast of Virginia. But the Fates were adverse to England. Rodney's health got no better, and he had to continue on his voyage home.

The first despatch had been sent off on the 17th of July; the second was sent after Rodney had sailed for England. The sloop-of-war *Swallow* carried the first despatch. She reached New York in the middle of August, while Graves was still off Boston. She was sent to find him, but on the way turned aside to chase an American privateer, after which she fell in with a squadron of three more American privateers and was forced ashore on Long Island. The *Active*, a brig-of-war, with Rodney's second despatch, and carrying the news of where the rendezvous was and that Hood had started, never reached New York at all. She was captured by the enemy when nearing the end of her voyage and carried a prize into Philadelphia. A duplicate of the *Swallow's*



despatch was left at New York, and this Admiral Graves read on his getting there on the 16th of August. The *viva voce* message, that the captain of the *Swallow* had been charged by Rodney to deliver to Admiral Graves, which would have helped to clear up the situation, as we have seen, could not be delivered.

Hood, on arriving off the Chesapeake on the 25th of August, sent forward a frigate, the *Nymphe*, to New York with a duplicate of the *Active's* despatches. The *Nymphe* arrived on the 28th, only an hour before Hood himself arrived.

Hood and the reinforcing squadron from the West Indies anchored off Sandy Hook on the forenoon of the 28th. They found orders awaiting them on board the guardship there, to cross the bar forthwith and moor inside New York harbour. Such a thing, however, Hood decided, would never do. He had his barge lowered at once, and set off for a long row to where Admiral Graves' fleet were lying inside the harbour, in order to place his views personally before his new chief. Hood found Graves in conference with Sir Henry Clinton as to the safeguarding of New York, and his abrupt appearance greatly astonished them. Hood put his view of the situation emphatically. He could not think it right, he said, that his fleet should come within the bar. On the contrary, every moment at sea was of vital importance, either to block the Rhode Island ships in or else to find and fight De Grasse. Hood's arguments prevailed. Admiral Graves assented to his view,

and promised to bring his fleet out and join Hood. He would give instructions, he said, for his ships to leave New York harbour the very next day. To make the situation still more serious, that same evening a cruiser brought in word that the French Newport squadron had put to sea. They had gone out—all the men-of-war and a large number of transports—on the 25th, three days before, and had disappeared. When last sighted, they were steering to the south-east.

It took Admiral Graves twenty-four hours longer than he anticipated before his available ships could leave port. Not until the evening of the 31st did they cross the bar; and then they counted only five ships of the line—the *London*, two seventy-fours, and two small sixty-fours—with the *Adamant*, a fifty-gun ship. One seventy-four, the *Robust*, and one sixty-four, the *Prudent*, had to be left repairing. Two other fifty-gun ships of Graves' fleet and a forty-four-gun ship were absent at sea. With Hood's fourteen ships that made up a force of nineteen of the line.

The united force was under sail by nine on the night of the 31st. Graves' plan of action was to overtake, or cut off, the ships from Rhode Island before they could join with the new-comers from the West Indies. He shaped his course accordingly, anticipating to fall in with them off the entrance to the Chesapeake. He arrived there, getting no intelligence of the enemy meanwhile, on the morning of the 5th of September; and as he stood in he

discovered the anchorage crowded with vessels under the French flag. Graves' frigates sent ahead to bring intelligence had failed him. Two of them had been told off to keep under sail, cruising outside the Chesapeake on the watch. Instead, they had anchored within the estuary, and in consequence had been cut off by the enemy and driven up the river, whence they had been unable to get away.

The exultation on board the British fleet at the sight was great. There the enemy were—the Rhode Island squadron with all their transports and store-ships! But the rejoicing proved short-lived. Rapidly the mass of shipping dissolved into two main groups. One remained where it was ; the other, forming into an array of men-of-war, drew apart and stood out towards Admiral Graves, drawing into line of battle as it advanced. Eight ships, or possibly ten, all two-deckers—was known to be the strength of the Rhode Island squadron. Twelve men-of-war, one of them a gigantic three-decker, and three big eighty-fours, were made out at the outset from the *London's* quarter-deck, as the long column of approaching war-vessels took shape. A little later six more were counted ; and then more still were seen, until there were twenty-four in all. It could not be De Barras from Rhode Island ; nor was it. He had not yet reached the Chesapeake. It was De Grasse himself in full force, with the whole of the French West Indies fleet complete at his back. Not even Rodney, with all his calculations, had imagined anything so formidable, anything like the situation

as it gradually disclosed itself in the course of that morning. Graves and Hood had between them, as has been said, nineteen sail of the line, four ships of the nineteen being only sixty-fours, the smallest class of third-rates.

Such was the position afloat on the forenoon of the day that decided the fate of the British colonies in North America.

No less menacing was the state of things at that moment ashore.

The toils had been set successfully. The quarry was already in the meshes. De Grasse's arrival in the Chesapeake in overpowering force closed in the net.

The enemy's wide-spreading combination had begun to work before Admiral Graves left New York. A week before that every French and American soldier and militiaman throughout the country was on the move. Yorktown, a few miles up the estuary of the Chesapeake, was their objective.

Cornwallis had retired there, as being a place within easy access of the sea, in compliance with orders from New York. He had at the same time sent a third of his army away to assist in the defence of New York, in accordance with orders sent him when it was first expected that the enemy's main attack was to be made on Clinton. With the rest, less than five thousand men, he had withdrawn to



Yorktown. There, as it was pointed out, Cornwallis would be close to his natural base, the sea, and might rely, if he got into difficulties, on relief from New York. He arrived at Yorktown early in August, and had been hard at work ever since fortifying his position with field-works and doing his best to convert an open township, in a bad situation, into a place of arms capable of prolonged defence. That a hard fight was before him, Cornwallis anticipated from an intercepted despatch of the enemy's; he had not the least idea, though, of the real magnitude of the peril that was hourly nearing him.

On every side the enemy were on the move, with the one aim of overwhelming Cornwallis.

Washington, at the head of from six to eight thousand troops, had left his camp in front of New York four days before De Grasse sighted the Capes of Virginia, at the entrance to the Chesapeake. He had started silently and secretly. Not a sentry of Clinton's outlying pickets had been able to discover what was going on behind the screen of the enemy's outposts. Washington's rear-guard had crossed the Delaware and were ten days on the way before the British head-quarters had an inkling that only a mere line of outposts were all that faced New York. In Virginia, Lafayette with six thousand more men occupied Cornwallis' attention meanwhile, until Washington should reach the scene. De Grasse brought with him St. Simon's division of between three and four thousand more men, drawn from the

French West Indian garrisons. They were hastened ashore to strengthen Lafayette, three days before Admiral Graves and his fleet appeared. Admiral De Barras with the Rhode Island squadron meanwhile was nearing the Chesapeake with the siege-artillery train of nine heavy guns and mortars that the French Government had sent out, and more soldiers. In all, between twenty and twenty-two thousand men, together with an overwhelming array of big guns, were closing on the land side round the weak earthworks of Yorktown, where Cornwallis, with his five thousand men and a few six-pounder field-pieces, and a handful of frigate guns landed from the five small British men-of-war that were in the river when De Grasse cut off their access to the sea, was striving to fortify himself against them. Such was the position on land at the time when Graves and Hood, on the 5th of September, came into view of De Grasse.

Now we turn to the doings of the two fleets.

De Grasse, when, between eight and nine o'clock that morning, his look-out frigate, on scout to seaward, first reported a strange fleet coming in from the eastward, made much the same error that Admiral Graves made at first about him. It was the Comte de Barras with the Rhode Island squadron and transports, said the French. They soon learned, however, from the numbers of the approaching men-of-war, that the strangers could only be the

enemy, the British fleet from New York, with reinforcements ; and at once steps were taken to recall their shore boats and landing parties, and prepare for getting under sail. The tide, though, was against them, and the wind was light and contrary, blowing from the north-north-east ; with the consequence that it was nearly noon before the French van ships had begun to move off. They worked out also in some disorder, taking stations without regard to their places in the line of battle, as officially fixed.

The entrance to the Chesapeake is some ten miles across, with Cape Charles on the north, and Cape Henry, from which the ensuing battle took its name, on the south. The main channel in and out of the river lies between Cape Henry and an extensive shoal, three miles to the north, known as the Middle Ground. Both fleets had to keep clear of that.

On the British side, as soon as the French in the Chesapeake were seen to be De Grasse's fleet, and to be getting under way, the *London* signalled to form the line of battle, with the ships at two cables apart. After that, between one and two in the afternoon, the signal went up to form on an east-and-west line. The French, as they came on, headed right offshore ; the British headed directly towards the land, in exactly the opposite direction.

At two o'clock, as judged from the *London's* quarter-deck, they were about three miles from the French fleet, which was to southward, and getting by then nearly abreast of the British line. A quarter of an hour later, as the British leading ships were

nearing the Middle Ground, to avoid shoal water all went about together. This brought Admiral Graves on the same tack as De Grasse, and steering nearly parallel.

At half-past three the *London* made a signal to the leading British ship, the *Shrewsbury*, to lead large, to head in more towards the enemy. Twice after that the *Shrewsbury* and ships of the van were signalled to and ordered to lead in closer towards the enemy. The rest of the fleet followed, ship after ship, in one straight line from end to end. Thus the British were approaching the French at an angle, or slantwise; the leading division, the original rear, under Rear-Admiral Drake, being now the van, owing to the inversion of the order of battle caused by the fleet going about. Heading for the enemy as the fleet was, Drake's ships were much nearer the French than the main body was, or Hood's division. The *London* was tenth ship from the van.

All had so far gone in the orthodox way: except that, earlier in the day, Admiral Graves—so Hood declared, and at that time he was in the van and in a position to form an opinion—had lost an excellent chance of striking the enemy a telling blow. That was between noon and one o'clock, when the French line was in some confusion, straggling out to sea in a hurry. The enemy, at that moment, according to Hood in a private letter, "afforded the British fleet a most glorious opening for making a close attack to manifest advantage." "Several of the enemy's ships," declared Hood, a very masterful man, and a



captious and severe critic, fully aware of his own high abilities, "must have been inevitably demolished in half an hour's action, and there was a full hour and a half to have engaged it before any of the rear could have come up."

At any rate, Graves did not do so.

Between three and four o'clock the leading British ships were twice signalled to from the *London* to close in more towards the enemy, and the line was closed up from end to end, with one cable's length interval between ships.

Admiral Graves after that committed the error of judgment that cost England her American colonies.

Just before four, as the *Shrewsbury* was nearing the French leading ship, the *London* made the signal, "Bear down and engage," and hoisted the red flag for close action. Now was the time for the whole fleet to swing their heads round to starboard, ship by ship, and stand directly for the enemy in a compact body, each ship supporting the next, all moving forward abreast, or *en échelon*, pushing in together for the enemy's van and centre. Even now several of the French rear ships were at a distance astern: some, indeed, were barely yet clear of the anchorage; others were rounding the Middle Ground. There was an appreciable gap between them and the main force of ships ahead.

Admiral Graves, however, preferred to keep his line and fight the battle strictly according to orthodox methods. At one masthead the *London* flew the red flag for "Close action." At another was displayed

the Union Jack, ordering all the fleet to preserve the line of battle, each ship to keep exactly in line, end on with the ship next ahead.

It was a paralysing error of judgment, although what was done was in strict accordance with the "Fighting Instructions," as they were called—the cast-iron regulations issued by the Admiralty of the day—under which battles at sea were to be fought. The "Fighting Instructions" laid down rules that fitted the situation in which Admiral Graves found himself. To depart from them had meant to another admiral before that a court-martial and cashiering. Excellent sea-officer as he was, and a plucky Irishman, Graves did not venture to take a line of his own. As a fact, moreover, he quite thought that he could win the battle by keeping within the strict letter of the law. So he set to work in a way that was strictly orthodox, but, in the circumstances, was not the game.

Hood, fuming and fretting in the rear, saw what was wanted, but could not stir a finger to alter things. So long as the Jack flew at the Commander-in-Chief's masthead, he and everybody else must stay where they were, all going down in Indian file in a "follow-my-leader" fashion.

To add to the difficulties of the situation, a short time after four o'clock, after, indeed, firing had begun, the admiral hove-to for ten minutes in order to dress his line. This was because in bearing down some of the ships ahead of his flagship had got crowded together and were out of station. "In bearing

down . . . the *London* by taking the lead had advanced further towards the enemy than some of the ships which were stationed immediately ahead of her in the line of battle ; and upon luffing up, to bring her broadside to bear, they having done the same thing, her second ahead was brought nearly upon the weather beam. The other ships ahead of her were likewise too much crowded together."

The *Shrewsbury*, the leader of the British line, acknowledged the *London's* red flag with an opening broadside within musket-shot. Instantly the French rejoinder came. A blaze of fire flashed out in reply from half a dozen of the headmost Frenchmen, and immediately others of the French, all down their line, took up the firing on the *Intrepid*, the second British ship, and the *Alcide* and the *Princessa*, following close in the *Intrepid's* wake. The concentrated fire smote the van ships of the British line hard and heavily. Three of the *Shrewsbury's* guns were disabled in the first few minutes, while the men at the guns fell fast, killed outright or wounded. The captain of the *Shrewsbury* was struck down dead ; his first lieutenant was seriously wounded ; sixty-four men were dead or in the cockpit ; the ship herself was seriously damaged in masts and spars and was rendered nearly unmanageable.

Each of the British ships following the *Shrewsbury*, as in turn they neared the enemy, coming on in single file, was met by a storm of cannon-balls from four or five of the enemy at once. The *Intrepid*, the second ship in the line, had forty-six

men shot down, and was almost disabled aloft. The *Ajax* and the *Terrible*, further along the line, suffered severely in turn. The *Terrible*, which had come from the West Indies in a dangerously leaky state, having to use her pumps all the voyage, received a number of shot below the waterline, which made her condition desperate. The *Ajax* had three of her guns dismounted and put out of action. The *Europe*, the next ship, had also three of her guns put out of action. The *Montagu* had four guns disabled and her masts shot through and so injured as to be in danger of coming down. The *Royal Oak*, the ship next ahead of the *London*, came off more lightly, for the enemy concentrated their guns rather on the flagship. The *London* had three guns dismounted and lost twenty-one men killed or wounded. Her foremast and mainmast were seriously damaged by shot, and her rigging was badly cut about. The *Resolution*, Lord Robert Manners, seconding the *London* astern, had nineteen men down, killed or wounded.

So far the enemy's fire reached. Very little harm was done to the *America*, the ship following the *Resolution*, and none of the ships coming up astern of her suffered. Hood's squadron, in fact, had no opportunity of firing a gun before De Grasse, adopting the French regulation tactics for a fleet engaging to leeward, had begun to draw his ships off, disengaging by groups, to re-form line a little further off and prepare to pound away again when the British, for the second time, came on to try to close



with him. But the French admiral had succeeded sufficiently already. Within an hour of the opening shot going off he had so roughly handled the ships of the British van as to ensure a drawn battle for at least that day.

The unfortunate effect of the Union Jack at the British flagship's masthead had kept the whole of Hood's division, as well as part of the centre, back and out of action. It had compelled them, as has been said, to follow on into the battle in line ahead, one by one, each ship keeping in the wake of her immediate leader. Hood and his ships, as a fact, were three miles from the enemy when the red flag to open fire went up on board the *London*. And in the light breeze that there was blowing, they could only approach the enemy slowly, at the pace of the slowest ship, making a wide angle of approach towards the French line.

Thus it came about that it was not until a quarter-past five that Hood's ships could get within distant cannonading range, "random shot," of the enemy, by which time De Grasse's van and centre had begun to draw off, were already making their general movement of edging away to leeward. Only three of Hood's ships fired a shot, and they admittedly wasted their powder.

The French admiral, on the other hand, had taken the fullest advantage of the situation. Before they began their withdrawal, De Grasse's ships had had opportunity, most of them, to range ahead of the British fleet, filing along, ship by ship, across and

past the head of Graves' van squadron, powerless in the circumstances to stop them, and cannonade the English heavily, all the French ships firing in succession. Only the defective gunnery of the French, and their habit of aiming on the upward roll, as the ship heaved on the swell, which tended to carry the shots as a rule too high, saved the British ships within range from much more serious consequences.

With the move off of De Grasse, the day's fighting practically ceased for Admiral Graves; although firing was kept up intermittently ahead of the *London* until sunset, after six o'clock. Then, after a few more final dropping shots, the red flag was hauled down.

So the battle which decided the fate of the British colonies in North America ended, dwindling off tamely and lamely to its end.

According to the returns sent in to the admiral, the British losses in killed and wounded numbered 336 all told: 90 killed, 246 wounded. The total loss on the French side, as was later ascertained, was considerably less, not more than 200 in all.

During the night preparations were carried on in the British fleet for a renewal of the battle next day. It had only, in the view of Admiral Graves, been temporarily broken off. He fully intended to make an attempt to force De Grasse to a decisive general action next morning. But, as it befell, he was to have no second chance.

In the course of that night officers from the van squadron came on board the *London* and reported serious damage to some of their ships, which, they said, would be incapable of service until their injuries to masts and spars had been made good. One ship, the *Terrible*, reported that she could not keep her leaks under. On board the officers doubted how long the ship could remain afloat.

The reports from his captains made Admiral Graves change his views about making another attack next morning. He would wait now, and see what might be done. Possibly, a chance for an attack on less disadvantageous terms might offer in a day or two. It did not, however, offer. De Grasse, in pursuance of his own plan of campaign, stood out to sea and took the weather gage, the windward position, which enabled him to give or refuse action as he pleased. His one idea now was to cover the arrival of the eight men-of-war from Newport who were convoying the siege train. De Grasse scored his point. On the 10th of September De Barras and the Rhode Island squadron, with all their transports, slipped past the British fleet and entered the Chesapeake without firing a shot.

All was over now for Admiral Graves, as far as any idea went of forcing on another battle with De Grasse. With De Barras's ships he had at his disposal thirty-five sail of the line to Graves' eighteen. The British admiral had had to burn the *Terrible*, as not worth keeping afloat, four days after the battle. In the face of the odds, further effort on the British

side was plainly hopeless. Leaving the French fleet anchored defiantly across the entrance to the Chesapeake, Admiral Graves, after a council of war on board the *London* on the 13th of September, gave orders for the fleet to turn back and make the best of its way to New York. There he hoped to refit his ships and meet Admiral Digby's reinforcements from England, after which a second attempt might be possible.

The very next morning, the 14th of September, Washington arrived on the Chesapeake, to assume supreme command of the land attack on Cornwallis' army.

Admiral Graves reached New York in four days; but the dockyard there, the head-quarters arsenal of the British North American Fleet, proved utterly unable to cope with the task in hand. The Admiralty at home had starved it during the preceding years, in accordance with the ministerial policy of "economy" at home and abroad, heedless whether or not the defences of the Empire were weakened, solely for the sake of vote-catching in the House of Commons. Appliances and means for repairing the ships were all wanting: carpenters' tools and stores of all kinds, mast and spar timber, and cordage, pitch and tar, sailmakers' materials, shipwrights' and caulkers' tools even, almost every article of vital necessity, down to sheathing-nails; all were either defective or wanting entirely. And at the same time the colonial-born workmen of the dockyard, for their own reasons, were sullen and



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slow, and many were absentees. It was a desperate position for those who understood the extremely critical situation of affairs.

On the 24th of September the expected reinforcement from England, under Admiral Digby, reached New York. It comprised only three ships—a scanty addition to the strength of the fleet on the spot, having regard to the situation on the Chesapeake—but three ships were all the Admiralty could spare, all they had to send. Digby came out as the new Commander-in-Chief, and brought instructions for Admiral Graves to proceed in the *London* and take over the Jamaica station; but anxious to have the advantage of the experience of his predecessor at so critical a moment, Admiral Digby asked Graves to remain in charge and direct the operations until an effort to save Cornwallis had been made. That was determined on the same day that Admiral Digby arrived. It was decided at a general council of war to despatch five thousand troops, half the army at New York, to the Chesapeake the moment that the refitted fleet could make a start.<sup>1</sup>

The council of war at New York came to its determination on the afternoon of the 24th of September. On that same afternoon Washington was making his first general advance before the lines of Yorktown, with twenty thousand men in

<sup>1</sup> Five thousand men from New York and Cornwallis' five thousand—ten thousand to face over twenty thousand which Washington had on the spot!

order of battle, driving back Cornwallis' outposts and establishing himself in a position of readiness to open the first parallel and place his siege train in battery to bombard the British camp. De Grasse on the sea side had already driven the British shipping off Yorktown, a forty-four-gun ship and two or three small frigates and some transports, to take shelter within gunshot of the improvised batteries on shore. A close investment of the British position was then established, while the preliminaries for carrying out the bombardment were taking shape.

Thus, at the outset, the enemy obtained a mastery over the British garrison, which showed the hopelessness of Cornwallis' position unless help from outside was speedily forthcoming. All depended on how soon Admiral Graves' fleet could make its second effort. It was, though, but a poor prospect.

The defective state of the dockyard at New York wrecked what chance there was of getting the fleet away within a reasonable time. Getting repairs done proved, in Hood's words, "unaccountably tedious." They took up a whole month, exactly four weeks from Graves' arrival after the battle.

The delay proved fatal to Cornwallis.

On the 9th of October the first parallel facing Yorktown was completed, and seventy heavy guns, 24-pounders and 18-pounders, opened fire on the hastily thrown-up British earthworks. The bombardment went on all that day and night incessantly, and continued the next two days and nights. Over a

thousand shells were thrown into the camp on the night of the 11th. The houses of the township of York were set on fire, and at the same time a battery firing red-hot shot set on fire the forty-four-gun ship off the shore and several transports, and sank most of the rest. Two of the British batteries were silenced, beaten out of existence under the storm of shot and shell. On the 12th the second siege parallel, enabling the enemy to come nearer still, was completed, and more 24-pounder siege guns opened fire. Upwards of a hundred heavy guns were now pouring shells into the British lines as fast as the gunners could load. The weak 6-pounders of Cornwallis' field batteries could do little in reply. By nightfall on the 12th more than half our batteries had been silenced, with heavy losses in men, the guns being dismounted or having their muzzles smashed, and the earthworks of the batteries laid flat. What guns remained serviceable had but little ammunition left. Still Cornwallis held out. He had had word that relief was coming to him ; a letter from Sir Henry Clinton had got through the enemy's lines.

On the 14th the enemy made two fierce attempts to storm the works. The first was beaten back. The second, at nine at night, was unhappily but too successful. "They stormed from right to left with seventeen thousand men, advancing with drums beating and loud huzzas." The key of the British defences fell into the enemy's hands: "Our two flanking redoubts were taken at the point of the

bayonet, and they could now enfilade our whole position." All the 15th and the 16th, both day and night, the siege guns continued their cannonading with redoubled fierceness. A gallant sortie by the Guards and Light Infantry and the 80th Foot spiked eleven of the enemy's guns, but the column could not get far. In desperation, at midnight on the 16th an attempt was made to move the troops across the James River in boats and escape into the country beyond, but a sudden storm stopped the attempt. Cornwallis' last chance was gone. On the 17th he sent a flag of truce to Washington proposing terms.

That very day, the 17th of October, Admiral Graves completed his preparations for sea, and orders were given for the fleet to sail early next morning. They were under way, twenty-five ships of the line and two fifty-gun ships in all, by the afternoon of the 18th, heading for the Chesapeake under all sail. At the same moment, Cornwallis, hopeless of relief and absolutely incapable of further resistance, was putting his signature to the only terms that Washington would grant—unconditional surrender. Before Admiral Graves' fleet was twenty-four hours out the British flag had been lowered on the ramparts of Yorktown; the French and American troops had taken possession of the lines, with drums beating and colours flying; and the remnant of Cornwallis's army was defiling, with colours cased, under the eyes of Washington, Rochambeau, and Lafayette, to



ground arms in the enemy's camp and be removed inland as prisoners of war.

Graves arrived off the Chesapeake on the 24th to find thirty-six French ships at anchor in an unassailable position, in full possession of the river entrance, and no news of Cornwallis to be got. Everywhere there was an ominous stillness ashore; the absolute cessation of all firing in the direction of Yorktown. What that meant there could only be one explanation—that the worst had happened.

The truth was first learnt from a shore boat, containing half a dozen British refugees, picked up five miles out by one of the ships of the fleet.

In the cabin of the *London* Admiral Graves sat down and penned a hasty despatch conveying the staggering news to General Clinton at New York. He told him that he had no official information of the surrender of Cornwallis, but there could unfortunately be no doubt that a catastrophe had taken place. Graves waited off the Chesapeake for a day or two longer, in the hope of getting more information, after which he returned to New York. Thence on the 29th of October he sent the *Rattlesnake* sloop-of-war to England, with Clinton's despatch to the Home Government, announcing the terrible fact of the disaster. No official intimation of the terms of the capitulation had reached him, wrote Sir Henry Clinton to the Secretary for War, Lord George Germaine. He had not had a word from Cornwallis as yet, but from what Admiral Graves had learned, the main fact of the surrender was

beyond dispute. No firing on shore had been heard since the 18th; and there could be no two opinions as to what had taken place. "We cannot entertain the least doubt," concluded General Clinton, "of his Lordship's having capitulated."

\* \* \* \* \*

How the news was received in England must be told. Lord George Germaine, after a despairing glance at Clinton's despatch, called his carriage and drove off to Lord Stormonth, the former British Ambassador at Versailles. The two then hurried to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Thurlow; after which all three went off to break the news to the Prime Minister, Lord North. Lord North received the despatch, so Lord George Germaine related, "as he would have taken a ball in the breast. He opened his arms, exclaiming wildly, as he paced up and down the apartment, during a few minutes, 'Oh God, it is all over!' words which he repeated many times under emotion of the greatest agitation and distress." The blank truth stunned the country. Nobody in England, outside political circles, had had any idea but that the war in America was going on satisfactorily. Most people, indeed, had been led to understand that the Colonials were at their last gasp, in spite of their French allies. All over the country the news came like the fall of a thunderbolt. Lord Gower, arriving in London on the following Saturday, describes London as "in mourning, every face clouded with sorrow," on that "Black

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Monday," as for long the day was remembered in  
the City.

\* \* \* \* \*

During November the fleet in North American waters dispersed. Hood, with eighteen sail of the line—his original fourteen and four additional ships—started back again for the Leeward Islands station to await Rodney's return from leave. Admiral Graves and the *London*, in pursuance of the order brought out from England by Admiral Digby, left for Port Royal, Jamaica.

There was nothing more to be done on the North America station, now that Cornwallis was a prisoner. It was known also that De Grasse and his whole fleet had set off hastily for the West Indies again. The danger point had shifted to the south. The capture of Jamaica, there was the gravest reason for fearing, was the enemy's next objective. That, as a fact, was the case.

## XV

### AT PORT ROYAL: WELCOMING RODNEY TRIUMPHANT

**A**DMIRAL GRAVES and the *London* arrived in Port Royal harbour in December. Had they come to be concerned with another Yorktown? That was the way in which the situation in Jamaica struck those on board the newly arrived flagship when they landed and heard the latest news of the hour.

The enemy were expected almost any day. Frigates were off the island at all points, on the look-out to bring the earliest news of their approach. Intercepted letters during November had brought to light startling details of a tremendous effort that was about to be made to wrest Jamaica from Great Britain. The reconquest of Jamaica was half the price that Spain had insisted on in return for her aid to France in the Channel. The other half was the recapture of Gibraltar, of which place the siege was at that moment being pressed forward fiercely.

Nineteen fresh sail of the line, under one of the ablest admirals France possessed, the Comte De Guichen, were expected at Martinique, coming direct



from Brest : five 110-gun ships (the most formidable three-deckers afloat), two eighty-fours, nine seventy-fours, and three sixty-fours. They were bringing out eight thousand French regulars and a tremendous siege train of heavy guns and mortars. De Grasse had brought from the Chesapeake thirty-six sail of the line, though some of them would be returning to France as escort of the delayed West Indian convoy and for repairs. For the attack on Jamaica he could count on having under his orders between forty and fifty of the line all told, in addition to a Spanish fleet of fifteen or twenty of the line, which was already at Havana with five thousand Spanish soldiers on board. De Grasse's original fleet itself, with the troops brought from America, would have on board upwards of six thousand French soldiers.

Such was the mighty armament that was to carry out the conquest of Jamaica, and was already on the move for the point of rendezvous—Cap François, now Cape Haitien—in San Domingo, when the *London* let go anchor at Port Royal.

The moment the concentration was complete the combined armada was to weigh anchor for Jamaica.

To meet it there was on the spot Hood, with altogether twenty-two sail of the line and two fifty-gun ships, at Antigua, the head-quarters of the Leeward Islands station ; three ships of the line at Port Royal—the *London*, the *Sandwich*, also a ninety-gun ship, and the *Ramillies*, a seventy-four. Two small forty-four-gun ships and a number of frigates and small craft completed the force that Great Britain

had in the West Indies. Ten ships more, perhaps twelve, wrote Lord Sandwich to Sir Samuel Hood in November, would be sent to reinforce him ; but not a ship more could be spared. Thirty-five sail of the line was the most that Jamaica and the remaining British West Indian islands (now reduced to four) could count on having to defend them against an expected hostile combination of between sixty and seventy sail of the line and twenty thousand soldiers. For soldiers on the British side there were not more than seven thousand regulars in the West Indies altogether, taking all the garrisons of the various places together.

Great Britain, indeed, had no more ships to send and no more soldiers. The Channel Fleet, as before from thirty to forty ships strong—all that the Admiralty could send to sea—was still being held at bay by the combined Franco-Spanish main fleet of from sixty to seventy sail of the line. It had to safeguard our shores from the ever-threatening French invasion, and at the same time had to hold itself ready to make a supreme effort, should urgent relief be suddenly required by the garrison of Gibraltar, then in the third year of the siege. All our other ships of the line were in the East Indies, campaigning against the celebrated De Suffren and desperately fighting a series of drawn battles with a French fleet of equal strength. As to soldiers, five-sixths of the troops answerable for the safety of England were half-trained militiamen. With invasion camps lining the French coast from Calais to

St. Malo, not a regular more could be sent out of England.

Great Britain was paying the penalty for weakening the national defences in time of peace on the plea of economy, endangering the existence of the British Empire, simply for party reasons and to catch House of Commons votes and swell a Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget. There would have been no Yorktown had the two-power naval standard of that day been adhered to by the Ministry in the years before the war, had the fleet kept superior in ships of the line to any combination of the next two navies: "the Fleet of Great Britain to be maintained superior to the Fleets of the two Houses of Bourbon," according to the accepted maxim of British eighteenth-century statecraft.

In the previous September, as a fact, the Channel Fleet had on one occasion actually invited its own destruction at the hands of the enemy, simply owing to its weakness. Its small numbers tempted the enemy to attack it and overpower it, with a superiority on their side of more than two ships to one. In the first week of September, 1781, just at the time when Admiral Graves was facing De Grasse off the Chesapeake with eighteen ships to thirty-five, the Channel Fleet had had to run for its life into Torbay, and had taken post there, drawn up in close line off Brixham, to defend itself at anchor as best it might. From various causes, partly the wear and tear of war, twenty-two sail of the line were all that the Admiralty could find for the Channel Fleet at that moment—to

face forty-nine of the enemy. Eight more ships—old vessels incapable of keeping the sea—were hastily fitted out to reinforce the twenty-two, but they could only join three weeks after the crisis was past, and there was not a single seaworthy ship more that the Admiralty could make use of in the emergency.

The peril, indeed, was greater than the wildest alarmist on shore could have imagined. De Guichen, the French admiral in command of the Combined Fleet, one of the smartest and ablest sea officers who ever served in the French navy, eagerly pressed on his Council of War to seize the golden opportunity and attack at once. "Look at the odds in our favour," he urged; "so magnificent a chance can never occur again! It will end the war at one blow," he declared, "and with it the power of Great Britain on the sea goes for evermore!" Fortunately for the British Channel Fleet at that moment, and for our national history too, the idea of so dealing with a British fleet proved too heroic for De Guichen's subordinates. The prestige of the Royal Navy saved the situation for England. The Council of War declined to sanction an attack. One officer only—a Spanish rear-admiral—supported the Commander-in-Chief. The rest were daunted at the audacity of the undertaking. So the hour of supreme peril passed. Dissension on minor matters set in among the leaders of the Combined Fleet after that, and then the armada withdrew into its ports for the rest of the year, the French ships to Brest and the Spaniards to Cadiz.



On shore at Jamaica, when the *London* anchored at Port Royal, all were in the midst of the invasion alarm, but at the same time facing their peril manfully and doing their best to help themselves and prepare for a stubborn defence. There were some three thousand British regulars on the island as a garrison. To assist them, and for the general safeguarding of the island, a Council of Defence sat daily, aided by a Committee of the House of Assembly, appointed to give effect to the decisions of the Council. Throughout Jamaica plantation work was stopped everywhere, while the planters and creoles flocked from all parts for the defence of the capital. On all the main roads leading to Kingston large trees were cut down and flung across to form obstacles and abattis. The batteries at Port Royal, as well as those at Old Harbour and Port Henderson, were repaired and strengthened. The gaols were emptied, and the convicts and prisoners were marched out to labour on the fortifications, assisted by twelve or thirteen hundred blacks drawn from the slave population. The local planter militia were reorganized and drilled and equipped, and volunteer corps raised. Money for everything was willingly found and new taxes were agreed to cheerfully. The only assistance asked of the Crown was a supply of muskets and powder and shot. In that gallant spirit did the men of Jamaica stand forward to take their part.

A new turn of events, however, was not far off. It came when Jamaica had almost ceased to hope for it.

While at Port Royal they were daily expecting intelligence of the starting of the Franco-Spanish armament, the gratifying news suddenly came to hand that Rodney had returned to the West Indies. He had not been expected back so soon ; and more than that, Rodney had himself brought the reinforcing squadron from England—twelve ships of the line.

De Grasse, they also learned, was on the point of leaving Martinique with thirty-six sail of the line under his orders to meet the transports of the invasion expedition and the Spanish fleet, then ready assembled for sailing, off the coast of San Domingo.

The next news was that the crisis was over. Jamaica was safe—at any rate, for the present.

The tidings of what had happened came quite suddenly, with dramatic abruptness.

On the 20th of April a frigate came hurrying in to Port Royal under press of sail. She carried a letter from Rodney to the Governor of Jamaica. The crew of the captain's gig which brought the letter ashore spread the good news before the Governor could open the letter. There had been a tremendous battle off Dominica, they said, lasting a whole day, and De Grasse's fleet had been broken up and had scattered in flight. Six ships had been taken, including the famous *Ville de Paris*, the French admiral's flagship, with, too, De Grasse himself on board. Sir

Samuel Hood had gone off north in chase of the fugitives. Rodney and the rest of his victorious fleet were coming on to Jamaica direct.

“I have the honour to acquaint you,” wrote Rodney to the Governor, “that after having had a partial engagement with the enemy on the 9th, wherein sixteen of my rear were prevented by calms from joining in the action, on the 12th I had the good fortune to bring them to a general action, which lasted from seven o’clock in the morning till half-past six in the afternoon, without one moment’s intermission. Comte De Grasse, with the *Ville de Paris*, and four other ships of the line, and one sunk, graced the victory. The remainder of their fleet was so miserably shattered, and their loss in men so very great, from their having their whole army of 5500 men on board the ships of war, that I am convinced it will be almost impossible to put them in a condition for service for some considerable time. I am hastening with my whole fleet for the succour of Jamaica, and you may hourly expect me with such ships of my fleet as are in a condition to keep the sea, off the east end of your island ; not a few will be obliged to repair at Port Royal.”

A week later the first of the captured French ships arrived by herself, two days ahead of Rodney’s fleet. Says the *London’s* log for the 27th of April :—

“Anchored here a French line-of-battle ship, prize to the Fleet under Sir George B. Rodney.”

Next morning a second Frenchman came in, as the *London* again records:—

“Arrived the *Gloryeux* [*sic*] of 74 guns, prize to the Fleet under the command of Sir G. B. Rodney.”

On the 29th, a Monday, Rodney himself and the main body of his fleet, with the other prizes taken on the day of battle, made their appearance. Notes the *London's* log:—

“Saw Admiral Rodney with 21 sail in company. Saluted Admiral Rodney with 17 guns.”

Hood, with other captured ships, came in a few days later. The Jamaicans had the satisfaction of witnessing the disembarkation from the prizes, as prisoners, of De Grasse himself, the admiral who was to have led the great expedition for their subjugation, as well as of three thousand French officers and soldiers. They saw landed also the entire French siege train of heavy cannon and mortars which had been used against Yorktown, and was in turn to have bombarded Kingston, besides the French war-chest for the expedition, comprising thirty-six heavy iron-bound boxes of money.

The widespread outburst of exultation on shore throughout Jamaica on Rodney's arrival continued day after day for a week. Bell-ringing and flag displays, cheering crowds ashore and afloat, and bonfires at night, all testified to the universal joy; while deputation after deputation from the magistrates and the chief inhabitants, and all classes of the community, rowed out daily in decorated boats alongside the *Formidable*, Rodney's flagship, to go on board



and offer their addresses of gratitude personally to "the saviour of Jamaica." For ten days after his arrival, Rodney, as he wrote home, did not set foot out of his ship, simply to avoid the demonstrations waiting for him on shore and "being pestered with addresses, etc."

The menace to Jamaica, though, if it was not so immediate as it had been, still existed, as Rodney was well aware. He was full of anxiety because of the weak garrison of Jamaica and the non-arrival of a new force of regulars from England, promised him in London last December. Not a man had come; not a man was on the way. There were no soldiers left in England to spare just then. Meanwhile thirty ships of De Grasse's former fleet were still in existence. The greater number of them, as Rodney learned during May, had been able to rally at Cap François after the battle. They had joined the fifteen Spanish men-of-war already there, and the transports previously collected for the expedition against Jamaica, which had some twelve thousand troops on board. Thus a hostile force of forty-five sail of the line had to be taken into account.

Hood was sent off to watch the enemy off Cap François with a squadron made up of the ships least damaged in the battle, and the *London*, on board which Hood's second in command, Rear-Admiral Rowley, flew his flag. Admiral Graves, it had been decided, was to return to England in charge of the *Ville de Paris* and the other prizes and a large

convoy. He had left the *London* ten days after Rodney arrived, transferring his flag to a seventy-four, the *Ramillies*.

The *London* and her consorts were at sea until the end of June, patrolling to the north of Jamaica and keeping a watch on the enemy, but without getting a chance of firing a shot. On their return to Port Royal they found Rodney on the point of putting to sea with the rest of the fleet, after having despatched the first convoy for England with the West India trade and most of the French officers he had taken prisoners, including the Comte de Grasse himself. The admiral's personal exertions had been successful in getting his shattered fleet refitted. After an extremely trying task, owing to the defective state of Port Royal Dockyard and the complete lack there of appliances and stores—Admiralty "economy" in previous years had crippled Port Royal for use in the event of emergency, in common with the British dockyards everywhere else—Rodney, by dint of hard driving and incessant personal supervision, aided by the opportune arrival on the 21st of June of a belated convoy of storeships from England, had managed to get practically the whole of his fleet repaired and put into condition to take the sea again. He now proposed to attack the enemy where they then were, at anchor at Cap François.

All was ready by the 9th of July, and next morning Hood's squadron, the *London* in company, weighed anchor and moved off to lead the fleet. With them sailed the homeward-bound trade convoy and the

prizes which Admiral Graves was taking to England. They had brought to outside Port Royal Harbour, and the centre and rear squadrons were getting under sail to follow them out, when a man-of-war direct from England, the fifty-gun ship *Europe*, flying, to everybody's surprise, an admiral's flag, made her appearance.

The *Europe* let go anchor, and a boat put off to the *Formidable*. Half an hour later, to the blank amazement of the whole fleet, the news spread that Rodney's successor in the command had come out on board the *Europe*—Admiral Hugh Pigot. He had been sent to supersede Rodney, to deprive the victorious admiral of his command. It was the first communication from England that Rodney had had since his victory. It came in the form of a curt message: "Strike your flag and come ashore." That was the Admiralty's way of dealing with the man who had won the biggest battle of the war. It was all a case of party politics. Rodney was a Tory, and the Whigs had come into power since he took up his command. Pigot was a Whig, third Sea Lord, and an M.P. who always voted with his party. He had never commanded a fleet; he had little or no war service to his credit; and he was personally a dull-witted and very commonplace individual. But something had to be found for him to repay his political services, and so he had been sent out to replace the most talented and brilliant and able sea officer of the time, in the presence of the enemy, at a most critical moment in the fortunes of Great Britain.

Rodney obeyed without a murmur. He left for England on the 23rd of July on board the *Montagu*, a seventy-four, handing over the *Formidable* to Admiral Pigot.

Only the *London* was there to see him leave Port Royal and to fire the last salute ever fired to Rodney's flag. This is the entry in the *London's* log:—

“23rd July, a.m. 5. Sailed Admiral Rodney with 4 line-of-battle ships. Saluted him with fifteen guns.”

Fifteen was two guns fewer than the *London's* salute when Rodney arrived. He was Commander-in-Chief then; now he was only an admiral going home.

The rest of the fleet had sailed on the 21st of July for New York, in order to escape the “Hurricane months” in the West Indies.<sup>1</sup> Most of the French fleet, it had recently become known, had left San Domingo for Boston, while the Spaniards were dismantling and landing the troops from the transports at Cap François, similarly on account of the near approach of the dangerous season.

The fleet returned from New York at the end of September, and then the *London* got a spell of blue-water service once more, and had a sharp fight on her own account as well. The French fleet

<sup>1</sup> The so-called “hurricane months,” August and September, were so dreaded in sailing-ship days, that the warships on both sides were accustomed as a regularly understood thing to pass into northern waters about July and not to return until October. Mariners had a thumb-rule in rhyme to remind them in what months to expect the storms. It ran: “June, too soon; July, stand by; August, you must; September, remember; October, all over.” This is not quite true, for in October they often have the very worst storms of all.



had likewise returned to the West Indies now that the hurricane months were over, and the project of a descent on Jamaica was again coming to the fore.

The *London* (now a "private" ship—one, that is, not flying an admiral's flag), under the command of Captain James Kempthorne, was sent off in company with the *Torbay*, a seventy-four, the senior officer's ship, and the *Badger*, a sloop (formerly commanded by Nelson), to patrol off the coast of San Domingo and get intelligence of the enemy's preparations. While so doing, at nine on the morning of the 17th of October, off the east end of the island, the *London* sighted two strange sail to the north-west and gave chase. She was some way ahead of her consorts, and by herself overtook the strangers, who proved to be two of the enemy, the *Scipion*, a French seventy-four, and the *Sybille*, a forty-gun frigate.

The *London*, which from the outset of the chase outdistanced her two consorts, in the course of the afternoon gradually drew up with the two French ships and made to close with the *Scipion*, the rear-most of the pair. A running fight then began between the three vessels, the two French ships using their stern-chase guns, and the *London* every now and again hauling up and yawing at right angles, to bring her heavy broadside guns to bear. To help the *Scipion*, as the *London* neared her, the

*Sybil* kept on the *London's* bows, whence, with her long 18-pounders, she maintained a galling fire on the big English ship. The *London* held on steadily and continued to gain until between eight and nine o'clock at night. Then, at length, she had got nearly alongside the *Scipion* and was able to bring her broadside guns into service with effect. There was, though, no shirking on board the Frenchman. The *Scipion* gallantly returned the *London's* fire and stood up pluckily against the three-decker, helped by the *Sybil* on the further side, who pertinaciously attacked the *London* as fast as her guns could be served.

For forty minutes the fight went on, the darkness of the night materially helping the French defence. Then, towards ten o'clock, the *London* and the *Scipion* collided. They hung locked together for a few minutes, the port bow of the French ship being abreast of the *London* amidships. In those few minutes the two attacked each other fiercely with small-arms fire, the duel filling the cockpit of the *London* with wounded men, struck down at the upper-deck guns. After ten minutes the *Scipion* broke herself free. She dropped off astern of the *London* and got a telling chance to rake her antagonist with effect. The damage she now received rendered the *London* unmanageable for the time being, during which, in the dark, she all but fell on board the *Torbay*, which was hastening to join in and was now, for the first time, about to get the opportunity of using her guns.

It was a chance for the *Scipion*, who, just before, had seemed as if she had been beaten to a standstill. So much so, indeed, that on board the *London* they thought that the French seventy-four had actually surrendered and that the *Torbay* had only to range alongside her to receive her submission. The *Sybille* at the same time made off, as if further aid to her consort was useless. The captain of the *Scipion*, however, would not yield while the barest chance was left of saving his ship. Though he had ceased firing and had apparently given in, as soon as the *London* dropped back, he roused up and made another effort to get away.

The delay to his opponents by the narrowly averted collision between the *London* and the *Torbay* was his opportunity. He used it to such advantage that it was not until next morning that the *Torbay* was able to catch the *Scipion* up. The *London*, with most of her damages made good, was following also. She was again nearing her enemy, when the French ship, in hugging the shore and trying to take refuge in a small rocky bay, which the deeper draft of the *London* would not allow that ship to enter, in the act of turning in struck a reef and sank.

So the encounter terminated ; with a casualty list to the *London* of eleven men killed and seventy-two wounded.

That was the last the *London* saw of the enemy for the war.

For the rest of the five months over which hostilities continued in the West Indies, the *London* remained on guard for the defence of Port Royal, now and then making a short cruise with the fleet, but remaining mostly with anchors down in harbour. The attack on Jamaica was still threatened, and the Franco-Spanish armada at San Domingo showed no signs of dispersing. Feeding "Port Royal Tom," the harbour shark, was practically their chief occupation on board the *London*—the monster shark that, according to local tales, the Admiral at Jamaica kept borne as a "supernumerary for victuals" on his flagship's books, and supplied with a daily meal of pork, thrown overboard from the flagship, to keep the ravenous brute in the neighbourhood of the anchorage and serve as a deterrent to any would-be deserters who might think of trying to swim ashore. The *London* continued on the Jamaica station until, in March, 1783, official news arrived from England that peace had been signed. There was no further need for the services of the British fleet across the Atlantic, and all returned home forthwith.

The *London* left Port Royal on the 26th of April, 1783. She arrived at the Nore on the 2nd of July, and hauled down the pennant at Chatham on the 20th of July.



## XVI

### WHAT A ROYAL ADMIRAL MISSED

**K**ING George the Third's *London* entered on her second war, the Great French War of 1793, as the flagship-designate of Prince William Henry, the Duke of Clarence, afterwards King William the Fourth, who was to serve in the Channel Fleet under Lord Howe. But she never hoisted the Prince's flag. Why that did not take place, and the sequel, is a very curious story indeed, as related in the journals and letters of Admiral of the Fleet Sir T. Byam Martin.<sup>1</sup>

“At the commencement of the revolutionary war in 1793, the *London*, of 98 guns, was fitted out by Captain Keats (now Sir Richard) for the reception of his Royal Highness's flag. The *London* was the best-manned ship, the best commanded, and the best officered we ever had, and but for politics, that bane and curse of military men, the Duke in such a ship would have been a flag-officer in the battle of the 1st of June, 1794.

<sup>1</sup> Navy Records Society. Vol. XXIV, pp. 14-16.

“The first use he made of a seat in Parliament, as Duke of Clarence, was to range himself in the ranks of those opposed to the King’s Government. But, not satisfied with this sufficiently silly proceeding, he had the superlative culpable folly to make himself conspicuous in his hostility to the war measures of the minister, then in active preparation, and which opened to his Royal Highness a field of glory that ought to have engrossed all his thoughts, and pointed him to the nobler pursuits of his profession. He even went so far as to make a speech in the House of Lords condemnatory of the minister’s proceedings.

“Mr. Pitt was not the sort of man to be trifled with in this way. He went forthwith to the King to tell his Majesty that a political admiral, and one who thought the war objectionable, was not a proper person to be placed as a flag-officer in the Grand Fleet, and therefore insisted that his Royal Highness should not be so employed.

“It was said, and I believe truly, that His Majesty was very anxious to send the Duke beyond the contaminating influence of Carlton House, where an association of able, witty, agreeable, mischievous Whigs, headed by Mr. Fox, Sheridan, Burke, etc., had captivated the Heir Apparent, and set him up as the influential head of their faction; and on this ground the King urged the sending off the royal sailor, to scatter his politics to the winds of the ocean. Mr. Pitt, however, would not yield, and was so decided and peremptory that orders went by

the post of that evening to turn over the crew of the *London* to other ships, and her captain was appointed to the *Niger*, of thirty-two guns.

"It is said when the devil wants to ruin a man he puts a pen into his hand; but the putting politics into the head of soldiers or sailors seems equally pernicious; yet how many are betrayed by the silly vanity, while others take it up to try what they can get by it for their own individual benefit—a pretty common propensity of our nature.

"The Duke of Clarence never served after this memorable piece of folly, by which he lost the glory of taking a share in the eventful and enterprising war, which lasted from 1793 to 1815. It was reserved for him to spend twenty-five years in idle dissipation on shore, and to resume his naval career when peace gave every other officer a desire to be quiet."

\* \* \* \* \*

This was what the *London* of the Great War was like, at the time that she was fitting out to take the flag of the future King William the Fourth. So fine and capable a three-decker in the forefront of the fighting line in Lord Howe's fleet would undoubtedly have made a notable difference in the hour of battle, and might well, indeed, have made the "Glorious First of June" yet more glorious for England.

The *London* had had a large repair since the American War and had been regunned throughout

with iron guns of a new type in place of her brass pieces. They made her an exceptionally powerful and hard-hitting antagonist for any "opposite number" she might have to face on the day of battle. A ton of solid shot, practically, was the *London's* "fighting weight," her weight of metal from a single broadside. Iron guns only were now to be seen on board throughout the fleet: not a single brass piece anywhere—certainly in the ships of the line. Our ironmasters, since the American War, had learned, under new supervision from Woolwich Arsenal, to found better metal and turn out more trustworthy pieces than of old, and at cheaper rates; with the consequence that the Royal Navy had discarded brass ordnance.

Fighting both broadsides at once, at the close quarters at which the battles of those days were fought, the *London* would discharge nearly two tons of solid shot at every round from her guns. Called, and officially rated, a ninety-eight-gun ship, the *London* actually mounted 106 guns, as set forth here:—

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| On the lower deck . . .                 | 28 32-pounders.      |
| „ middle . . .                          | 28 18 „              |
| „ upper . . .                           | 30 12 „              |
| „ quarter . . .                         | 8 12 „               |
| „ forecastle . . .                      | 4 12 „               |
| „ „ . . .                               | 2 32-pr. carronades. |
| „ round house (or poop)                 | 6 18-pr. „           |
| Total { 98 guns<br>8 carronades } . . . | 106 pieces.          |



Carronades, or “smashers,” as the Navy called them, were short-barrelled guns of light weight, using the same shot as the “long guns,” but only effective at about a quarter of “long-gun” range. They were specially designed for fighting at close quarters. At the ranges at which battles were fought in Nelson’s day, one 32- or 24-pounder carronade would damage an enemy more than three or four long 12- or 9-pounders could. The carronade hit as hard, and made a bigger hole at its distance than the long gun did ; besides being lighter and quicker to handle, and requiring a smaller gun’s crew. The gun’s crew of a 32-pounder “long gun” numbered fourteen men ; only four men were required for a 32-pounder carronade. They were called “carronades” after the Carron Ironworks in Scotland, where they were invented and first made, at the time of the American War.

With five degrees of elevation, its normal limit, and with its regulation charge of two pounds ten ounces of powder, a 32-pounder carronade carried just over a thousand yards ; with the same charge its point-blank range was a little over three hundred yards. An ordinary “long gun,” a 32-pounder, with its usual charge of ten pounds of powder, carried a thousand yards point-blank ; or, with seven degrees of elevation—the maximum charge for most purposes—2150 yards.

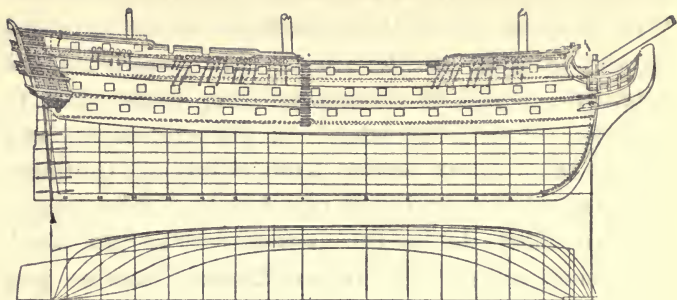
For the day of battle, if serving with the Channel Fleet, the *London’s* supply of powder was, according to regulation, 356 barrels (ninety pounds each) of

powder ; if serving on a foreign station, 402 barrels. Five half-barrels of "fine powder " were supplied for the priming of the guns. The supply in the magazines weighed altogether from twenty-five to twenty-six tons of powder. In the shot-rooms and lockers the *London* carried from eighty-six to ninety tons weight of round shot of all sizes. The supply was thus allotted : for the 32-pounders on the lower deck, sixty rounds per gun on Channel service, and eighty rounds on foreign service ; for the 24-pounders and the guns and carronades on the main- and quarter-deck, forecastle, and poop, seventy rounds per gun on Channel service, and a hundred rounds on foreign service. Over and above the round-shot allowance, from seven to twelve rounds of grape and canister were provided for every gun.

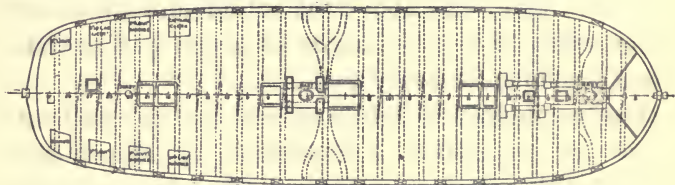
Seven hundred and fifty officers and men all told were the regulation complement, or ship's company, of the *London*, including a hundred and fifty marines.

These were the official dimensions of the *London*, as altered and partially reconstructed between 1785 and 1787 :—

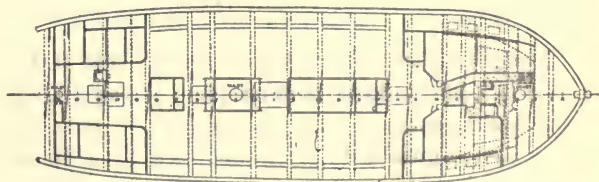
|                                 |                            |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Length on the lower deck . . .  | 176 ft. 6 in.              |
| „ of the keel for tonnage . . . | 152 ft. $6\frac{5}{8}$ in. |
| Breadth, extreme . . . . .      | 49 ft. $8\frac{5}{8}$ in.  |
| „ moulded . . . . .             | 40 ft. 10 in.              |
| Depth in hold . . . . .         | 21 ft.                     |
| Burthen in tons . . . . .       | 1894                       |



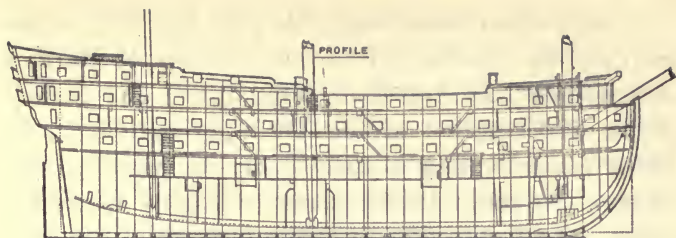
SUN DECK.



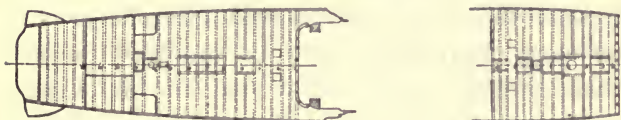
ORLOP DECK AND BELOW DECK.



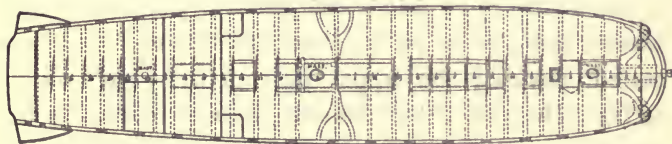
H.M.S. *LONDON*, 98-GUN SHIP. BUILDING DRAWINGS TO SHOW CONSTRUCTION.



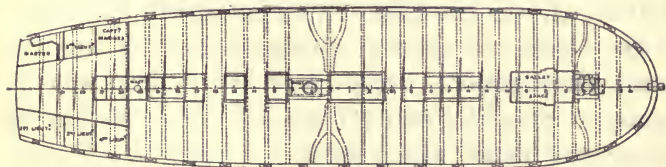
QUARTER DECK AND FORECASTLE.



UPPER DECK.



MIDDLE DECK.



H.M.S. *LONDON*, 98-GUN SHIP. BUILDING DRAWINGS TO SHOW CONSTRUCTION.



A very different-looking ship also was the *London* of 1794, in externals, from the *London* of Hardy's retreat and the American campaign. The plainer style of decoration of the Trafalgar period, in its main features, had already come in vogue in the Navy. No more did the gleam of highly varnished sides, set off with blue or crimson bands of "frieze" ornamentation along the bulwarks, and with artistic devices in gay colours overlaying it, catch the eye. Gone were the elaborately carved figureheads and gilded stern framework, with its moulded taffrails and balustraded galleries, that made so fine a show in the fleets of Keppel and Rodney. From the water-line half-way up the side, to the sills of the main-deck ports, all was black—tarred over. Above that to the chains, just under the general line of the bulwarks, dull yellow paint, "dockyard drab" as it was called, covered the upper part of the ship's sides. Where the old frieze decoration used to be in the *London*, a narrow topside edging of plain black finished off the colouring of the hull. At the stern, beyond a painter's flourish or two in yellow here and there, and the lettering of the ship's name, also in yellow, all was plain and unpretentious to look at.

On board the *London*, within the ship, it was the same throughout: everywhere everything was as plain as possible, entirely devoid of the display of decorative detail which formed a noticeable feature in the older men-of-war. One thing to be observed was the new style of painting the ship within, which, since the American War, the Navy had adopted. In

the *London*, sixteen years before, a dull red over everything on deck—to render the bloodstains and splashes of battle as inconspicuous as possible—was the prevailing tone, according to the usage of the Navy ever since the time of the *Loyall London* and Charles the Second's Dutch wars. Certain fittings on deck still retained the old colour in some ships—the capstan, the wheel, the belfry, the bitts, and the ladders to the main deck—but a new colour altogether had come in for various other fittings within-board, as well as for the inner sides of the bulwarks. Green—a colour introduced experimentally in the first instance at the time of the American War by one or two captains, who copied the prevailing fashion of the Spanish fleet—had since then come to be the favourite colour at the dockyards for all the “weather-work” of ships within-board. Below, on the lower deck, the dull red colour remained as before, though now often whitewashed over, after the ship was out of dockyard hands, for the sake of coolness and lightness of appearance.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lord Bridport's running fight with the French Brest Fleet, off Belleisle in the Bay of Biscay, in July, 1795, was the first chance of firing a shot that the *London* had in the great French War. On that occasion she was the flagship of the third in command, Vice-Admiral John Colpoys, who had hoisted his flag on board in October, 1794.

Lord Bridport's battle, though, as things turned

out, did not prove much of an opportunity for anybody concerned. The enemy made a wretchedly poor display, heading for port all the time; the coast off which the encounter took place was a notoriously dangerous one for its reefs and cross currents; and, at the same time, our charts were worse than defective, while the pilots in the British fleet were mostly renegade French Royalists, who were timid for the fate of their own necks, in case the ships which they were on board of should get wrecked or stranded, when they themselves would fall into the hands of their countrymen, and be either shot out of hand or be hurried off to the guillotine.

The flagship's pilot, indeed, declined the risk. "So near the coast," wrote an officer, "was the *Royal George* that the pilot on board refused to proceed, when Lord Bridport actually took charge of the ship himself." The fleet went so near in, the same officer said, that "the enemy had already opened a battery on us from the shore."

One of the few prizes that the Channel Fleet was able to make that day fell to the *London's* guns—a French seventy-four, *L'Alexandre*.

The journal of Captain Griffiths of the *London* relates this of the ship's part in the action:—

"About  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 6 got alongside and began to engage the *Alexander*. At 7 her Colours were haul'd down, but her pend<sup>t</sup> continued up, and, her firing not having ceased, continued to engage her till about 10 mts. past 7, when she struck . . . when we ceased firing at the *Alexander*. Observed another

of the Enemy's Line of Battle ships had surrendered and was on fire abaft, but the fire was soon extinguish'd."

The master's log adds one or two other details:—

"At 6 the headmost ships began to engage the Rear of the Enemy. At 7 opened our fire on the *Alexander*, after she had been Engaged by the *Orion*. Fired several broadsides at her when she struck. Made sail and left her to be taken possession of by the ships astern. Set all sail, pursuing [*sic*] the enemy running into Port L'Orient. Fired broadsides as we could get them to bear. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10 left off engaging; being then within half a mile of the shore in 15 fms. water. Wore round: hove too and hoisted out the boats, and sent them to assist in taking possession of the prizes."

"If the enemy had not been protected by the land," wrote Lord Bridport in his despatch to the Admiralty reporting the battle, "I have every reason to believe that a much greater number, if not all the line of battle ships, would have been taken or destroyed. . . . When the ships struck, the British squadron was near to some batteries and in the face of a strong naval port, which will manifest to the public the zeal, intrepidity, and skill of the admirals, captains, and all other officers, seamen, marines, and soldiers employed upon the service, and they are fully entitled to my warmest acknowledgements." A step in the Peerage was conferred on Lord Bridport, raising him to the rank of Vis-



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count, and the City of London presented the Freedom to him, with a gold casket.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fog and stormy weather, aided by the faulty strategy at that time in favour at Whitehall, lost the *London* a notable opportunity in December, 1796.

All through the autumn of that year the British Government had been well aware that a large force, both naval and military, was assembling at Brest. Hoche, the most talented and brilliant of the generals of the Revolution, was in charge of it; but its destination was kept a close secret. Our spies and secret agents could find out nothing. Gossip in Paris said that it was for a descent on Portugal, but such a plan of campaign was hardly likely on the face of the general situation.

At any rate, it behoved the Admiralty to keep the closest watch on Brest—which they failed to do. Instead of sealing up the Brest Fleet with the Channel Fleet in force, the Admiralty contented themselves with “observing” Brest from a distance, splitting up the Channel Fleet meanwhile into two widely separated halves. Admiral Colpoys in the *London*, at the head of fifteen sail of the line—a 110-gun ship, two ninety-eights, one eighty-gun ship, and ten seventy-fours—cruised on the watch, on a rendezvous some twenty-four miles westward of Ushant. Lord Bridport with fifteen more sail of the line was lying idle at Spithead, awaiting develop-

ments. So the great French armament at Brest was "observed."

Then, in the middle of December, came a storm, a fierce easterly gale, which swept the *London* and her consorts off their station and twenty leagues away out into the Atlantic ; whereupon the enemy took advantage of the opportunity and put to sea. On the 16th of December, the Brest Fleet—fifteen sail of the line, with fourteen frigates and fourteen smaller vessels, carrying 13,400 soldiers—set out, bound for Ireland. There, several thousands of disloyal Irishmen were expecting them. They were to be armed with the muskets and ammunition that Hoche was bringing across, and were only awaiting the news of his landing to rise in insurrection all over the country.

One of Colpoys' frigates saw the Brest Fleet coming out, as night was closing in on the 16th. She utilized the darkness to make false signals with blue fires and flares and rockets, which caused great confusion among the enemy, one of whose seventy-fours ran on a reef and was lost with most of her crew. After that the British frigate stood off seaward, to find and inform Admiral Colpoys. At that moment the *London* and her squadron were many miles away to seaward ; beating back against a head wind to regain their station. Had they been off Brest when the enemy made their start, in the extraordinary condition of nervousness in which the French captains were in regard to Colpoys, they would have made short work of the Irish expedition.

Admiral Colpoys on board the *London*, as a fact, first learned what had happened only on the 19th, three days afterwards. Where the French were then nobody could tell him. He had no instructions whatever from the Admiralty, nor from his own chief, Lord Bridport, as to how he was to act in such an emergency as had arisen. All that Colpoys could do was to stand across the Channel to within sight of the Lizard, in the hope of falling in with some of the enemy, or of picking up some French stragglers from which definite news might be gleaned. Nothing, however, was seen or heard of the French, and in the absence of all intelligence as to the object of the expedition, nobody could guess the direction in which the enemy had disappeared.

Another storm then burst on Colpoys' fleet, with hard gales of wind and a dense sea fog. The storm scattered the ships right and left. When, on the last day of the year, the weather moderated, the *London* and five consorts were off the Isle of Wight, storm-battered and half disabled, working past the back of the island and making for the anchorage at Spithead. The nine other ships of the *London's* fleet were—nobody on board the flagship knew where—somewhere in the Channel. The enemy, for their part, the line-of-battle ships of Hoche's expedition, were at that moment on their way back to Brest.

The Irish enterprise had already proved a complete failure. Most of the French ships had contrived to reach Bantry Bay, badly buffeted and many of them

the worse for the weather. But their generalissimo, Hoche, failed to appear. He had sailed in one of the frigates, and an English Channel cruiser had met the ship and chased it far away to westward. Before the French vessels which reached Bantry could land their soldiers, the gale, after lulling for a short while, came on to blow hard once more. Ship after ship dragged anchors and parted cables. Alarmed by a rumour that Colpoys was on their track, seeing and hearing nothing of Hoche, and expecting every hour that a force of British troops from Cork would arrive and prevent their landing, the senior French officer on the spot, Rear-Admiral Bouvet, gave up the idea of a landing and ordered all the ships at Bantry to cut cables and make for home. They did so, and after four more days of gale and fog, haunted throughout by the ever-present fear of being cut off by the British Channel Fleet—which was, in fact, nowhere near them at any time—on New Year's Day of 1798, the bulk of the French line-of-battle ships of the expedition got back into Brest. They were followed within a week, at intervals, by the remaining frigates and vessels with the soldiers—having lost *en route* thirteen ships: seven captured by British frigates, four wrecked, and two foundered, one a seventy-four-gun ship.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next episode in the *London's* story is of a very different kind.



## XVII

### THE MUTINY AT SPITHEAD: WHAT TOOK PLACE ON BOARD THE *LONDON*

**A**N episode of a very grim kind then comes into the *London's* story—the tale of her part in the mutiny at Spithead in May, 1797. The *London* at that time was still the flagship of Vice-Admiral Colpoys, then second in command of the Channel Fleet.

There were two outbreaks of mutiny at Spithead: the first in April. In that the *London's* men behaved with apparent moderation, and were kept fairly in hand by the vice-admiral and the officers. So quietly, indeed, did they bear themselves, that when general order seemed to have been restored at the end of April, and the Channel Fleet moved out from Spithead to the anchorage at St. Helens, the *London* was left behind, with the special intention that Admiral Colpoys should use his influence over two recalcitrant ships that were detained there, the *Minotaur* and the *Marlborough*.

The second outbreak, which unfortunately brought the *London's* name into notoriety throughout the country, took place the 17th of May. It was the

result of the ignoring by the Admiralty of certain of the complaints made by the seamen in the earlier mutiny. Some of their grievances had been attended to, and the fleet had obeyed orders and gone out to St. Helens, expecting to hear shortly that the remainder had been redressed. That was not done, and trouble followed quickly.

The new outbreak of mutiny began on the 26th of May on board the three-decker *Duke*, with a threat from the crew to flog or hang their captain if he did not at once give up to them his copy of a certain paper that had just been received from the Admiralty. The document, a letter of instructions with regard to the steps to be taken in case of fresh trouble, was given up. It was at once sent round and read to the crews of the other ships, exciting distrust and indignation everywhere. The temper of the men soon displayed itself openly. When next morning the signal to weigh anchor was made, the fleet once more refused to stir. The "delegates," as the ring-leaders of the mutiny called themselves, then lowered boats and rowed off to the *London* at Spithead, in order to demand her adhesion to the common cause.

Admiral Colpoys from the quarter-deck of the *London* marked what was taking place in the fleet at St. Helens. It was easy to understand the passing and repassing of boats from ship to ship; the red flag flying for a second time at the masthead of the *Royal George*; the insolent symbol of yard-ropes dangling from the yard-arms on board all the ships

as a warning to any who might be "traitors." Following on that he saw the ships' boats with the delegates pulling in for Spithead, and guessed what was coming. He was a man, however, not easily daunted. Admiral Colpoys determined in any circumstances to make a fight for his authority.

He at once had all hands turned up on board the *London* and addressed them personally. He asked them if they had any more grievances, and, if so, what they were. The reply from the crew was that they had none at all. On that the vice-admiral told the seamen to go below and remain quiet. He then ordered the officers and the marines to get under arms and muster on deck. He would not, he said, permit the mutineer delegates from the rest of the fleet to come on board the *London*. If they tried to do so, the marines were to fire on them. Most of the seamen, not knowing for the moment, perhaps, what else to do, quietly obeyed orders and streamed off below. With them went, what in itself was considered significant, the three warrant officers—the boatswain, the gunner, and the carpenter.

Some of the ship's company, however, it was next seen, did not intend to obey the admiral's order. A number of the men—mostly able seamen and older hands—did not go below. They collected defiantly on the forecastle, facing across to where the admiral stood and the officers, who with the marines were assembling under arms on the quarter-deck.

In a few minutes the delegates from St. Helens came alongside. They were promptly warned off



N° 7  
**LIEUTENANT.**

*Engraved by J. B. H. & Co. London.*



N° 10  
**CAPTAIN of MARINES.**

*Engraved by J. B. H. & Co. London.*

OFFICERS IN THE CHANNEL FLEET—1797  
*Rowlandson*





by the marine sentries posted at the side-ladder. The delegates replied by shouting up an appeal to the crew, to the men on the forecastle and some of those below who were crowding at the open port-holes. The appeal had its effect. The men on the forecastle began at once to stir. Some of them daringly set to work to cast loose one of the forward guns and to lash a crowbar across its muzzle, preparatory to slewing it round and pointing it to sweep the quarter-deck. Lieutenant Peter Bover, first lieutenant of the *London*, saw what they were after, and shouted across to them to desist. He would fire on them, he declared, if they did not stop. Some of the men left the gun, but the rest kept on. Then one man angrily dared Lieutenant Bover to fire. Bover took him at his word. He fired, and the man fell mortally wounded. That was enough for the "Londons." The whole crew broke instantly into open mutiny. The men on the forecastle rushed aft; those below began to force their way on deck, some up the hatchways, some swarming through the ports and clambering up the sides. At the same time the marines on the quarter-deck flung down their muskets, broke their ranks, and mixed themselves up with the seamen.

In the scuffle at the main hatchway there was more firing. The officers and marines posted there resisted the men who tried to come up, and blows were given on both sides; until the fight was becoming so severe that the officers sent to the admiral for leave to use their firearms. Colpoys assented. "Yes, certainly,"

he replied ; " they must not be allowed to come up till I order them up." A number of shots were then fired, replied to by other shots from the men below, which wounded a marine officer and a midshipman, and some of the seamen, one mortally.

After that the *London* was in the hands of the mutineers and the officers were at their mercy. The men were all on deck in a moment and fraternizing with the delegates. Then they raised a general cry to seize the first lieutenant. He, they shouted angrily, was responsible for the firing and the death of their shipmate. They laid hands violently on the first lieutenant, and carried him forward to the fore-castle, where a rope was quickly rove to the foreyard-arm to hang him.

It proved an eleventh-hour escape for Lieutenant Bover. The noose had already been put round the officer's neck when one of the delegates, Valentine Joyce, of the *Royal George*, the ringleader in the Spithead mutiny, who had formerly sailed with him in another ship, interposed and saved his life. " His life was saved," wrote one of Bover's sisters from what Lady Howe told the family, " by one of the very delegates he fired upon. They seized our dearest Peter and were in the act of completing his destruction, when Joyce ran, clasped him by the neck, and called out to his party, ' If you hang this man, you shall hang me, for I will never quit him ! ' The recollection of how near it was makes me shudder every time I think of it." It is also said that another of the mutineers appealed to the rest

not to hang Lieutenant Bover, "because he was a brave boy."

The mutineers hesitated ; though there were still cries to "run the first lieutenant up." All the while the undaunted Bover was reproaching them in bitter terms for their "vile mutiny," telling them to their faces that they were "the basest and most dastardly of cowards and traitors."

The next moment Admiral Colpoys himself intervened, and, as we are told, "with much difficulty obtained a hearing."

In spite of what had passed and the excitement of the outbreak, no hand had been laid on Colpoys. The mutineers, for one reason or another, had preserved some sort of respect for the admiral personally. It is said that at first one of the mutineers went up to the admiral and called him a "d——, b—— rascal !" but he was silenced by his fellows by a threat to pitch the man overboard. Another, who had made as if he would point a musket at the admiral, had the weapon knocked out of his hands. On the other hand, the men were eager to go to any length against Lieutenant Bover.

Admiral Colpoys, when at length he got the men to listen to him, faced the crowd boldly. He frankly took all the responsibility for the firing on himself. If any one was to blame for what had taken place, Colpoys asserted, it was he, as commanding officer. Mr. Bover had only obeyed his orders, the orders that he, the admiral, had received from the Admiralty. Admiral Colpoys' address in the end saved Lieu-



tenant Bover, as he considered then, and often said afterwards, at the risk of his own life. In his report to the Admiralty, written that afternoon while under arrest in his cabin on board the *London*, Colpoys wrote this: "I can now solemnly declare, and mean to do so at my latest moments, should the poor misguided men, who are to be my judges, allow me to say as much to them, which I am inclined to think they will, as they really paid unexpected attention to me, even at a moment that one could have little expected any attention from them, but what was produced from overboiling rage and fury, at seeing several of their wounded and dying shipmates weltering in their blood. Even then, I say, though armed with all manner of missive weapons, they gave me a hearing, and which certainly saved Lieutenant Bover's life, though the rope was about his neck, and indeed, when taken from his, I expected it would have been placed about mine."

In response to the admiral's appeal for Lieutenant Bover, the delegates demanded to see his orders from the Admiralty. When they had been produced, Admiral Colpoys, Captain Griffiths, the captain of the *London*, and the other officers were removed below under arrest and ordered to be confined to their cabins.

Neither Admiral Colpoys nor Lieutenant Bover was, however, as yet assured of his life. The crews of the ships at St. Helens, all, by now, in open mutiny, demanded the death of one of them, or both, requiring, as they clamoured, "Blood for

blood!" In response to that outcry the unexpected happened. Suddenly, things took a new turn. The crew of the *London* themselves intervened on behalf of their officers. They refused to let them suffer. They drew up and forwarded a letter flatly refusing to allow their officers to be harmed.

This is the letter sent in the name of the ship's company of the *London* to the crews at St. Helens. It is in itself a curious and interesting document:—

"To the Delegates of the Fleet at St. Helen's.

"You have, I presume, read the address of the ship's company, of which I am a member, to you, recommending me as their representative in future. They have further given me the most flattering proofs of their opinion of my abilities to act as a Man and a Christian ought to do. Under these circumstances, I flatter myself you will hear me with patience, as I am partly convinced that your own sentiments, when compared with mine, will join me in saving a deserving character from ruin and destruction. I shall not dwell on the particulars of yesterday; they, I am confident, are still warm in your memory, but only recall your attention to the behaviour of our brother Valentine Joyce—his intrepid behaviour, in rescuing the unfortunate gentleman from the hands of an enraged multitude, will, I am sure, make a deep impression on your minds, and will, I hope, influence you to act in a manner worthy of the character of Christians and British seamen.

"This much, my brethren, for preface. Permit me now to speak for that ship's company whose confidence I enjoy. In the first place, had they followed the momentary impulse of passion, and wreaked their vengeance on that unfortunate gentleman, a few minutes would have brought to their

recollection the amiable character he always bore among them, and I am confident would have embittered the latest moments of their lives. Now, my brethren, your general cry is 'Blood for blood!' Do you mean that as a compliment to us; to assist us in following error after error? If so, it is a poor compliment to us indeed. Do you (let me ask you) think it justice? I hope not: if you do, pray from whence did you derive that authority to sit at a court over the life of even the meanest of subjects? The only answer you can give me is, you are authorised by your respective ships' companies; but is that authority sufficient to quiet your consciences for taking the life even of a criminal, much more that of a deserving and worthy gentleman, who is an ornament to his profession in every respect? I can almost safely say you will say no. But if you are to be influenced by your ships' companies, in spite of your own opinion—I am but a single individual among you—and before this arm of mine shall subscribe the name of Fleming to anything that may in the least tend to that gentleman's prejudice, much more to his life, I will undergo your utmost violence, and meet death with him hand in hand.

"I am nevertheless as unanimous as any member in the fleet for a redress of our grievances—will maintain that point hand-in-hand with you all, so long as you are contented with your original demands; but that moment I hear you deviate from those principles, that instant I become your most inveterate enemy. You see, brethren, I act openly, and am determined to support it, as I will never form a part to do injustice to my country, and, for the future, shall expect that whatever comes before us shall be only conducive to the much-wanted and desirable end of restoring this fleet to the confidence of an injured country. Let these be your aims, and depend on every support from me and this ship's company, and be assured that the life and character

of Mr. Bover shall always remain inviolate in our hands ; and we think any step taken to the contrary, highly injurious to ourselves as brothers of your community.

“ We expect your answer this night, and beg to remain yours most sincerely.

“ Signed,

“ JOHN FLEMING.

“ Per desire of the *London's* ship's company.”

The temper of the seamen of the St. Helens fleet towards the officers of the *London* may be judged from this fact. The wounded marine officer and midshipman were conveyed to Haslar Hospital ; but the sick men there showed such a savage disposition towards them and an evident intention of doing them an injury, that the authorities found it necessary to transfer them to a private house.

The sequel to the episode, as regarded Lieutenant Bover, is curious. “ When Lieutenant Bover was taken on shore to abide the result of a coroner's jury, the crew expressed their unwillingness to give him up, but he promised them he would return to the ship. The verdict being ‘ justifiable homicide,’ his friends wished to prevail on him not to return and put himself in their power, but he persisted in rejoining his ship, as he had promised. He was received on board with three cheers, requested that he would not leave them, to which he assented, and continued to serve in the *London* till made Commander on the 14th of February, 1798.”

Admiral Colpoys and his flag-captain and Lieutenant Bover were kept under arrest for three days.



The two former were then sent ashore by the mutineers, together with the chaplain, the Rev. Samuel Cole. The chaplain of the *London*, as it would appear, was lucky to get off so lightly. For some reason of their own, the mutineers had prepared for Mr. Cole "tar and feathers, with a grating to launch him upon, and a boat-hook and hammock for a sail."

The mutiny of the *London* terminated with the return to duty of the ship's company, together with the rest of the Channel Fleet, on the 15th of May, when also a new commanding officer, Captain John Child Purvis, took charge of the ship.

This is all, it is curious to note, that the *London's* log, kept by the master, says about the mutiny :—

"Sunday, 7th of May.—At 1 p.m. Commenced a mutiny in the ship by the people refusing to go below when ordered; by which 3 seamen and 1 marine was wounded, the seaman since dead. Lieut. Sims of the Marines shott through the left arm, Mr. Simpson through the right. Sent all the wounded to the Hospital."

Captain Griffiths' journal says even less. It makes one reference only to the mutiny, and then goes on with the ordinary entries dealing with the general daily routine on board, which would seem to have been regularly carried on during the time that Captain Griffiths himself was actually under arrest and in the hands of the mutineers.

"Sunday, May 7th. At Spithead.—Muster'd the



N° 9  
ADMIRAL



N° 8  
CAPTAIN

OFFICERS IN THE CHANNEL FLEET—1797  
*Ronaldson*



Ship's Compy at Quarters. Performed Divine Service and read the Articles of War. Broke, lost and thrown overboard, sundry Gunner's stores, the Ship's company having mutinied.

"8th.—Unmoored ship and hove short on the small Bower. Emp<sup>d</sup> getting ready for sea.

"9th.—Weighed and came to sail . . . working down to St. Helens; at  $\frac{1}{2}$  pt. 4 shorten'd sail and came to. The agent came on board and paid prize money."

A glance at the composition of the ship's company of the *London*, as stated in the ship's books, in connection with the mutiny at Spithead, may be of interest. All told there were on board 324 Englishmen; 59 from Scotland; 16 from Wales; and 137 from Ireland. There were fewer foreigners than usual, only 16, hailing from Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Portugal, Germany; also 5 Americans and 4 Frenchmen. There were 83 Londoners among the Englishmen, drawn, as stated in the "where born" column in the ship's books, from the following parishes and districts: Stepney, Shadwell, Mile End, Wapping, Whitechapel, Shoreditch, Spitalfields, Rotherhithe, Moorfields, Coldbath-fields, St. Katherine's, the Borough, Holborn, Westminster, St. Martin's Lane, St. James's, and one man from "Little Bandy-Leg Walk, London." The official complement of the ship, including the officers, 27 volunteers and supernumeraries and 90 marines, was 738. Of those the sailors proper, the "ship's company," as mustered in the



first week of May, counted 561. In looking through the *London's* books this curious detail is also noteworthy: how the men were delivered in batches from the various localities as the pressgangs, at work all over the country, made their hauls and sent the results in. Nine out of ten of the Londoners on board were shipped in two large batches or drafts; the men from the Midlands, from the West Country, and those from Hampshire and Wiltshire, the Scottish batch and the Irishmen, and a final draft sent on board at the Nore from East Anglia, all arriving in separate deliveries, one day one draft or batch, a few days afterwards another, the names from each locality appearing on the books grouped together.

\* \* \* \* \*

After the Channel Fleet had returned to its duty, the *London* was packed off elsewhere. She was sent to join the Mediterranean Fleet, so that her ship's company might come under the repressive influence of Lord St. Vincent. Mutineers were apt to meet with short shrift at the hands of the stern Earl.

This is how the *London* sailed to join her new admiral and how she was received, as described by Earl St. Vincent's secretary, Mr. Tucker.

"When this ship departed from England she was in a state closely bordering upon open insubordination. Indeed, on the evening before she sailed, when some improper conduct of the men in her launch was complained of by Captain Barrie, who for that purpose went on board her in his gig, shot

was thrown from the ship's lower-deck ports to sink his boat alongside; and with perceptible agitation and audible murmuring the surly, sulky hands would scarcely weigh the ship's anchor or loosen her top-sails.

“As she approached Lisbon, the men began to bethink themselves to whom they were going, and to show some little respect to their Officers, and one or two of the Petty-officers would now and then condescend to touch their hats as the First-Lieutenant passed along the decks.

“When they arrived in the Tagus, as soon as they had saluted Lord St. Vincent's flag, Captain Purvis waited upon the Commander-in-Chief on board the *Ville de Paris*, and the *London's* boat was, as was always the case with those from ships fresh from England, ordered off from alongside. During the Captain's audience, the well-known great strength of the tide in the river made the barge drop again close to the flagship, when one of the bargemen, addressing a blue-jacket's head peeping out of a lower-deck port, said, ‘I say there, what have you fellows been doing out here, while we have been fighting for your beef and pork?’ To which the other very quietly said, ‘If you'll take my advice, you'll just say nothing at all about all that here, for by G—d if old Jarvie hears ye he'll have you dingle dangle at the yard-arm at eight o'clock to-morrow morning.’”

Lord St. Vincent's secretary relates this story also. It shows the tone on board some of the *London's*

new consorts, under "the discipline of the Mediterranean," as Nelson phrased it.

"It so happened that the *London* was placed abreast the *Ville de Paris*, and there having been a good deal of conversation in the fleet of the very violent lengths to which she had carried her mutiny at Spithead, it was surmised that her crew were still disobedient, and that this station was assigned to her for prompter enforcement of orders. Upon that, the ship's company of the *Blenheim* wrote, through their captain, to Rear-Admiral Frederick, whose flag was on board her, that 'they had heard that the "Londons" were still refractory, and, if so, they hoped that the Admiral would solicit for the "Blenheims" the honour of going alongside of her, and teaching those fellows their duty and obedience.' The 'Blenheims' were thanked, but were informed that it was a 'groundless apprehension.' In reality, the 'Londons' had in a week become as quiet as mice, and ever maintained an excellent character."

## XVIII

### “THE DISCIPLINE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN”

THE “Londons” were not long in seeing for themselves the methods of their new chief.<sup>1</sup> They had no long time to wait before they witnessed with their own eyes Earl St. Vincent’s way of dealing with mutineers. They came out, as it happened, in the middle of the worst trouble in the Mediterranean Fleet, in time to see two stern and terrible lessons given to the disaffected ; first of all, to be represented at the

<sup>1</sup> Our new “improved *Dreadnought*,” the battleship *St. Vincent*, takes the name from the great admiral under whom the *London* was at this time about to serve. The old *St. Vincent*, for so long an object of special interest in Portsmouth Harbour as a training-ship, which was broken up only a few months ago, was the first ship of the name, and was launched during the Earl’s lifetime. She was one of three sister first-rates, the *Nelson*, the *St. Vincent*, and the *Howe*, three magnificent 120-gun ships, and the finest men-of-war ever seen afloat up to then. In connection with that *St. Vincent*, the Admiralty not only asked the Earl to lend a bust of himself which had been presented to him, for use as a guide in carving the figurehead—a full-length gigantic-sized effigy of Lord St. Vincent—but also specially invited him to attend the launch and perform the naming ceremony for the great three-decker himself. The state of his health, however, and his great age—he was in his eightieth year—prevented Earl St. Vincent from being present.



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dread scene that took place on the execution morning on board the *Marlborough*.

As soon as the "Londons" joined they heard the full details of the earlier tragedy off Cadiz: all about the hanging of the four ringleaders of the mutiny on board the *St. George*; how the court-martial passed sentence of death late one Saturday night, immediately following on which, the admiral, overruling the promise of the president of the court that the men should have five clear days in which to prepare for death, forthwith, to the blank surprise and consternation of the fleet, in order to strike terror into the disaffected, fixed the execution for nine o'clock the very next morning—a Sunday morning—and had the culprits run up to the yard-arm by the hands of their own messmates. Care was taken that the "Londons" were told all about the affair of the *St. George*, within a short time of their joining Earl St. Vincent's flag, by way of a deterrent from like courses.

There was, though, but little real spirit of disaffection amongst the *London's* crew. For one thing, probably, the composition of the ship's company had its influence. There was a smaller proportion of Irishmen than usual on board the *London*. During the two years 1797 and 1798, it was the large Irish drafts in the ships which from time to time joined St. Vincent's fleet from the Channel, that were at the bottom of all the mischief.

The Dublin Castle authorities, by agreement with the Admiralty, who were only interested in manning

as many ships as possible, regardless of the men's antecedents, were using the Navy as a penal establishment. They "sent the scoundrels who had been convicted of firing houses and farmsteads, houghing horses, hacking off the udders of cows, of murders and horrible outrages, off by scores to the fleet." These men laid plots—"in constant correspondence with the society of rebels who styled themselves 'United Irishmen'"—to stir up sedition and mutiny, to seize and carry ships into Irish harbours, kill officers, and hoist the Harp instead of the British flag. It came out later on that on board several ships the crews were "largely sworn to be 'true to Ireland,' to erect a Roman Catholic Government there, and aid their brethren in fighting against the 'Oppressor.'"

A copy of the terms of the oath taken by the conspirators was seized on board one of the *London's* consorts. "I swear to be true," ran the words, "to the Free and United Irishmen, who are fighting our cause against tyrants and oppressors, to defend their rights to the last drop of my blood, and to keep all secret within my breast; and I do agree, the next time the ship looks out ahead at sea, to carry her into Brest, and to kill and destroy all the officers and every man who opposes, . . . and to hoist a Green ensign with a Harp in it, and afterwards to kill and destroy all Protestants."

The crisis of the trouble off Cadiz came almost directly after the "Londons" joined. That occurred just as steps were being taken to fit out the pick of

St. Vincent's two-deckers for special service "Up the Straits"; in the Mediterranean, whither Nelson was being sent for the cruise which resulted in the battle of the Nile. The "Chosen Band," as the captains of the ships called themselves, were to start the instant a reinforcement of an equal number of ships from England arrived off Cadiz. They set out directly the new-comers were in sight; and the departure and arrival of the two squadrons were so contrived that the Cadiz Spaniards were unaware that a single ship had been changed.

"Every ship destined to compose the squadron of reinforcement," described Sir Edward Berry, Nelson's flag-captain on the *Vanguard*, from what he was told on the "Chosen Band" joining Nelson, "was ready to put to sea from Cadiz Bay at a moment's notice. As soon as Sir Roger Curtis, with the squadron under his command, was visible from the masthead of the admiral's ship, Captain Troubridge and his squadron put to sea, and were actually out of sight, on their way to Gibraltar, before the former cast an anchor on the British station off Cadiz." This is how the log of the *London* records the double event:—

"May 24.—Parted from the Fleet, *Culloden*, *Bellerophon*, *Defence*, *Theseus*, *Golia* [*sic*], *Zealous*, *Minotaur*, *Swiftsure*, and *Majestic*: joined the Fleet the *Prince*, *Liviathan* [*sic*], *Edgar*, *Montigue* [*sic*], *Marlborough*, *Powerfull* [*sic*], *Centaur*, *Lion*, *Success*,<sup>1</sup> and *Incendiary*."

<sup>1</sup> The *Success* was a frigate, the *Incendiary* a fireship.

The *Marlborough*, whose arrival the *London* thus noted, had a very bad record. In the previous year she had been one of the very worst ships in the first mutiny at Spithead, and she was also there, and concerned, when the outbreak on board the *London* took place. As has been said, indeed, the *London* had been purposely left at Spithead in company with the *Marlborough*, in order that Admiral Colpoys might use his personal influence with the recalctrants of the *Marlborough*. The *Marlborough* joined off Cadiz, with on board, in addition to her original ill-affected crew, a large number of seditious Irishmen who had been drafted into the ship at Berehaven.

The *Marlborough* came into the fleet off Cadiz with two men in irons, and a request for a court-martial. A dastardly plot had been formed on board to murder the officers and carry off the ship, while on her way to join Earl St. Vincent. She was to have been taken into Brest. Quite by chance, at the last moment, the carefully planned conspiracy had been foiled and the two ringleaders arrested. The facts were reported to Lord St. Vincent on the *Marlborough* joining, and a court-martial was ordered at once.

It was immediately assembled; and the first of the *Marlborough's* traitors was sentenced to die. On that the Commander-in-Chief ordered him to be executed on the following morning, and by the crew of the *Marlborough* alone. Not a man from any other ship, he directed, would assist in carrying out



the punishment. That was the same treatment that St. Vincent had meted out to the mutinous crew of the *St. George*. It was a new departure from the usage of the service. The special order led to an extremely painful scene on board the flagship. On the receipt of the death warrant, Captain Ellison, of the *Marlborough*, waited on the Commander-in-Chief. "He begged to remind his Lordship that a determination that their shipmates should not suffer capital punishment in connection with a previous affair, had been the first cause of the ship's company's mutiny. More than that, Captain Ellison expressed his conviction that the *Marlborough's* crew would 'never permit' the man to be hanged on board that ship!"

Startling and intensely dramatic was the scene that followed, as Lord St. Vincent's secretary describes it.

"Receiving the captain on the *Ville de Paris'* quarter-deck, before the Officers and ship's company, hearkening in breathless silence to what passed, and standing with his hat in his hand over his head, as was his Lordship's invariable custom during the whole time that any person, whatever were his rank, even a common seaman, addressed him on service, Lord St. Vincent listened very attentively till the captain ceased to speak. Then, after a pause, he replied—

"'What! Do you mean to tell me, Captain Ellison, that you cannot command His Majesty's ship the *Marlborough*? If that is the case, Sir, I



ADMIRAL. SIR JOHN JERVIS, EARL OF ST. VINCENT, G.C.B.  
*After Hoppner's portrait at Greenwich Hospital*



will immediately send on board an officer who can !’

“The captain then requested that, at all events, the boats’ crews from the rest of the fleet might, as always had been customary in the service at executions, attend at this also and haul the man up, for he really did not expect the ‘Marlboroughs’ would do it.”

There was a blank silence for a moment. Then the grim old admiral made his hard reply.

“Lord St. Vincent sternly answered, ‘Captain Ellison. You are an old Officer, Sir ; have served long—have suffered severely in the service, and have lost an arm in action. I should be very sorry that any advantage should be now taken of your advanced years. That man shall be hanged—at eight o’clock to-morrow morning—and by his own ship’s company. Not a hand from any other ship in the fleet shall touch the rope ! You will now return on board, Sir ; and, lest you should prove not able to command your ship, an Officer will be at hand to you, who can.’”

Without another word Captain Ellison retired.

“After he had reached his ship, he received orders to cause her guns to be housed and secured, and that at daybreak in the morning her ports should be lowered.”

A general order was then issued to the fleet for all launches to rendezvous alongside the *Prince* at seven o’clock next morning, armed with carronades and carrying twelve rounds of ammunition each



gun. Each launch was to be commanded by a lieutenant, and to carry an expert and trusty gunner's mate and four quarter-gunners, exclusive of the launch's crew. The whole would be under the command of Captain Campbell, of the *Blenheim*.

The orders for Captain Campbell were drawn up, and he was sent for to the *Ville de Paris*, to receive them at the hands of the admiral himself. St. Vincent summarized the instructions verbally. Captain Campbell "was to attend the execution, and if any symptoms of mutiny appeared in the *Marlborough*, any attempt to open her ports, or any resistance to the hanging of the prisoner, he was to proceed close, touching the ship, and fire into her, and continue his fire till all mutiny or resistance should cease. Should it be absolutely necessary, he should even sink the ship in the face of the fleet."

Exactly as commanded, at seven o'clock next morning all the launches (including that of the *London*, as the log records), manned and armed, proceeded from the *Prince* to the *Blenheim*, and thence, Captain Campbell having assumed the command, to the *Marlborough*.

Having lain on his oars a short time alongside, Captain Campbell formed his force in a line athwart her bows, at rather less than pistol-shot off. Then he ordered the tompions to be taken out of the caronades, and each piece to be double-shotted.

This was what they saw from on board the *London*, whose shrouds were a dark mass of men,

At half-past seven all hands throughout the fleet were turned up "to witness punishment." Immediately the eyes of all were bent on a powerfully equipped boat as it quitted the flagship. Every one knew who was on board. It was the provost-marshal, conducting his prisoner to the *Marlborough* for execution.

The crisis had come. Now it was to be seen whether the *Marlborough's* crew would hang one of their own mates.

The *Marlborough* was lying in the centre, between the two lines of the fleet, and the boat was soon alongside. Thereupon the man was speedily placed on the cathead and the halter placed round his neck. A few awful moments of breathless stillness followed, until broken by the watch-bells of the fleet clanging out the hour. Instantly the flagship's bow gun fired, and at the sound the man was well lifted off and swung up half-way to the yard-arm.

Then to the general consternation, before all eyes, he dropped back! A shudder ran through all who were looking on. "The sensation throughout the fleet," to use the words of the admiral's secretary, "was intense."

This is what had happened. "At this dreadful moment, when the eyes of every man in every ship were straining upon this execution as the decisive struggle between authority and mutiny, as if it were destined that the whole fleet should see the hesitating unwillingness of the *Marlborough's* crew to hang their rebel and the efficacy of the means taken

to enforce obedience, by an accident on board the ship, the men at the yard-rope unintentionally let it slip. The turn of the balance seemed calamitously lost."

A moment later the "Marlboroughs" had their hold again, and their messmate had paid his penalty. "They hauled him up to the yardarm—the law was satisfied. Said Lord St. Vincent at that moment, perhaps one of the greatest in his life, 'Discipline is preserved, Sir!'"

Finally the assembled boats made a demonstration, as described by the secretary. "When the sentence was executed . . . that it might again be made perceptible to all the fleet that abundant force had been provided to overpower any resistance that a line-of-battle ship could offer, Captain Campbell broke his line, and rowing down, placed his launches as close alongside the *Marlborough* as their oars would permit. Re-forming them, he resumed his station across her bows, and continued there until the time for the body's hanging had expired. Then it was taken down, sewed up, as usual, in its own hammock, with a shot, and carried in one of the *Marlborough's* boats half a mile from the ship and sunk. After that Captain Campbell withdrew his force, and the *Marlborough's* signal was made, to take her station in the line."

A second example of their chief's methods of repressing mutiny, of which the "Londons" were eye-witnesses, was the hanging of five men from one ship, the *Princess Royal*, for, as Lord St. Vincent

himself put it, "mutiny of the most atrocious nature." The prime mover in the mutiny made a full confession, although that did not save his neck. He was an Irish lawyer named Bott, a member of a seditious society in London, who had volunteered as a man-of-war's man as an emissary to seduce the seamen. "This man," wrote Collingwood, who witnessed his execution from the *Excellent*, one of the *London's* consorts off Cadiz, "had been employed in several missions for the society in England to the United Irish, and was thought a proper person to disseminate their principles in the fleet, and for that purpose alone he entered." "That villain Bott" was St. Vincent's term for him. "The officers throughout the whole fleet," wrote St. Vincent to Nelson, "were to have been massacred, and if the ships from Ireland, with the *London* and *Hecla*, had joined, I was to have been hung, with the other admirals, captains, and officers. The plan afterwards was to go up and revolutionize your squadron, and then proceed to Ireland." Eighteen others of the *Princess Royal's* mutineers were distributed throughout the fleet, "to be kept constantly on the poop (not in irons), to eat and drink there, and to have no communication with the respective ships' companies," in the terms of the admiral's general memorandum. One of the men was so kept on board the *London*.

Such were the warnings that the "Londons" had set before their eyes on joining the Mediterranean Fleet. As far as the *London* was concerned, the



two examples proved sufficient. In less than three months the "Discipline of the Mediterranean," to use the phrase attributed to Nelson, had made the "Londons" "as quiet as mice."<sup>1</sup>

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In October St. Vincent's health broke down, and he had to give up the command afloat, but retaining control of the Mediterranean station—which extended at that time from the Tagus to the Darda-

<sup>1</sup> Of the general tenor of their everyday life during that summer of 1798, for the *London* and the rest of the fleet off Cadiz, here are one or two glimpses:—

"St. Vincent," so Captain Mahan says, "was not content with mere repression. Outwardly, and indeed inwardly, unmoved, he yet unwearingly so ordered the fleet as to avoid occasions of outbreak." He "rightly believed in the value of forms, and he was careful to employ them in this crisis to enforce the habit of reverence for the insignia of the state and the emblems of authority. Young lieutenants were directed to stand, cap in hand, before their superiors, and not merely to touch their hats in a careless manner. . . . The hoisting of the colours, the symbol of the power of the nation, from which depended his own and that of all the naval hierarchy, was made an august and imposing ceremony. The marine guard, of near a hundred men, was paraded on board every ship of the line. The National Anthem was played, the scarlet-clad guard presented, and all officers and crews stood bareheaded, as the flag rose to the staff with slowly graduated dignity."

Forms and ceremonies, however, were not the only means that St. Vincent employed as restoratives of tone and discipline. "He saw that," describes an officer of those days, Captain Brenton, "while the ships lay inactively at anchor before the port, the sailors, for want of some object to employ their attention, would brood over the late acts of severity, and, if compelled to perform their ordinary duty, would do it without heart or cheerfulness. He therefore caused the boats from the ships of the fleet, well manned and armed, to be divided into three parts, each taking its turn, under the command of a lieutenant of the flagship, to row guard during the night under the walls of the garrison; while bomb-vessels, mortar-boats, and launches with heavy carronades kept up a constant fire on the place,

nelles—living ashore at Gibraltar and conducting from thence the administrative concerns of his charge. Lord Keith, the newly arrived second in command, took over the fleet off Cadiz and maintained the blockade, the *London* continuing with the flag at sea as before.

There were no executions under Lord Keith; but there is one entry of a punishment that was hardly less dreaded than the yard-arm—a “Flogging through

and the unhappy Spaniards were made to feel the effects and deplore the consequences of a mutiny in the British fleet.”

At the same time, St. Vincent did not overlook the personal interests and comfort and health of the seamen in his care. “He was always mindful to obtain for the officers and men every indulgence compatible with the great object in view. While the fleet lay before Cadiz, fresh beef, vegetables and fruit, were procured at any expense from the coast of Barbary, letters were forwarded with the least possible delay, the cleanliness of the ships was never carried to a greater degree of nicety, a regular sick berth was first established, and proper apartments in each ship were appropriated to the reception of the sick, who received the utmost care and attention that medical aid and kind treatment could afford.”

The captains were enjoined to keep their men in cheerful spirits, and to brighten their lot. “My wits were ever at work,” wrote Collingwood, captain of the *Excellent*, “to keep my people employed both for health’s sake and to save them from mischief. We have lately been making musical instruments, and have now a very good band. Every moonlight night the sailors dance, and there seems as much mirth and festivity as if we were in Wapping itself!” When the weather was fine, relates another officer, there was daily bathing in the sea. “A topsail was bent over the ship’s side into the sea, in which the least venturous might wash themselves, while the rest enjoyed that indescribable delight of a good swim in the ocean. The light-hearted playfulness of the creatures whose spirits were thus let loose burst into all sorts of gambols and drollery. Some dashed off the ship’s head; others went off her yard-arms: a few of the strongest swimmers with their clothes on; every antic, every feat of strength and activity that could be imagined was performed, till the word of command recalled the people on board to the orderly quiet of stern discipline.”

the Fleet." The log of the *London* records a flogging through the fleet on the 20th of October, and that an unfortunate man from another ship, whose offence is not stated, was given twenty-five lashes, as part of his punishment, alongside the *London*.

What passed under the eyes of the "Londons" on that cruel Saturday morning off Cadiz may be gathered from this account of the general procedure on such occasions.

A long-drawn-out and elaborately cruel process was a flogging through the fleet by court-martial sentence. As many as five hundred lashes might be inflicted; so many lashes to be laid on alongside each ship in the fleet, until the total was reached, or the victim became insensible while the flogging was being administered, and could stand no more.

The punishment was carried out in this way.

On the appointed day, on the yellow punishment-flag going up, the launch of the ship to which the man under sentence belonged was lowered and manned for the special duty. The culprit was then tied up to a grating fixed up in the boat on the slant, or to a triangle rigged up instead. A fifer to play the "Rogue's March" and a drummer with muffled drumsticks, took post at the same time at the bows. Then two boatswain's mates with cat-o'-nine tails, and the ship's master-at-arms to count the lashes as they fell, took their places close by the prisoner. In charge of the boat was a lieutenant of the prisoner's ship, with the surgeon and the captain's clerk, who carried a copy of the court-martial sentence in his

hand. Meanwhile the boats of the rest of the fleet had assembled and formed up in procession ahead, ready to take the launch in tow, and row slowly from ship to ship throughout the fleet, or alongside certain ships, as might have been ordered by the court-martial. On board every ship in the fleet all hands had already been turned up to witness the passing of the procession, crowding along the bulwarks and in the shrouds, with the officers on the quarter-deck in full dress.

At the appointed hour, nine o'clock, the flagship fired a gun for the punishment to commence, whereupon the first instalment of the flogging was given alongside the prisoner's own ship, the sentence being duly read out by the clerk. A blanket was then thrown over the poor wretch's bleeding shoulders, and the procession of boats set off to row to the next ship, the fife and drum playing the "Rogue's March." Coming alongside of the next ship, the sentence was again read aloud, and two fresh boatswain's mates stepped down into the boat to give the prisoner the allotted number of lashes, each stroke being counted aloud by the master-at-arms. After they had done their part the boatswain's mates went back on board their ship, the blanket was again thrown over the hapless creature's shoulders, and the "Rogue's March" began again as he was towed off to the next ship. From that they went to the next, and so on—a cruelly long and tedious pull, often against wind and tide—until the fleet had been gone through and the full number of lashes administered, or the half-conscious victim broke down. "Sometimes," as an



officer relates, "it took hours before the punishment was over, and often when the man could bear no more then, he was taken to the sick berth of his ship, until, weeks afterwards, perhaps, he was brought out with half-closed-up weals to be again flogged until the sentence was complete or the man died under it." "I believe," wrote another officer, "no man has been ever known to hold up his head after going through the fleet. . . . The torture is protracted until, to use a sailor's phrase, 'their very soul is cut out.' After this dreadful sentence they almost always die."

Now, at length, happily, we have done with punishments in the *London's* story.

One day of intense excitement came the "Londons'" way while with Lord Keith off Cadiz. News of near approach of an unexpected enemy suddenly reached them.

On the morning of the 3rd of May, 1799, the *Childers* brig, and the frigate *Success*, ran into the fleet from the northward. The *Childers* reported to Lord Keith that she had fallen in with the Spanish Ferrol Squadron off Cape Finisterre. Captain Crawford of the *Success* brought the surprising intelligence that the whole of the French Brest Fleet, between thirty and thirty-three sail of the line apparently, were coming down on him. The *Success* had met them off Oporto and been chased by them, but after a narrow escape had outdistanced her pursuers. The wind, fresh from the north-west, with a rising

gale behind it, would bring them down on the fleet off Cadiz within twenty-four hours.

Including the *London*, Lord Keith at that moment had with him fifteen sail of the line. He weighed anchor at once from the roadstead where he was lying, some eight miles from Cadiz, and got under sail to keep on the move in front of the harbour. "Strange frigate joined, and signal made to come to sail," says the *London's* log. The Spaniards, at any rate, said Lord Keith, should not get out to join the Brest Fleet without a fight. They numbered, in Cadiz harbour, twenty sail of the line in all, seventeen of them ready for sea.

The Brest Fleet had eluded the vigilance of the Channel Fleet, and had stolen a march on them. Utilizing a dark night—the night of the 26th of April—the Brest Fleet, commanded by the best admiral that the French Republic had, the Minister of Marine himself, Admiral Bruix, had given the slip to Lord Bridport's fleet, which had been responsible for their custody. After that the Brest Fleet had made off south to pick up the Spanish Ferrol Squadron and bring out the nineteen Spaniards at Cadiz, which would put the French admiral at the head of over half a hundred ships of the line.

Off Cadiz, all the afternoon and evening of the 4th of May, the wind kept freshening and blowing harder and harder. Next morning it was a stiff gale from the north-west, and misty on the horizon.

At eight o'clock the Brest Fleet came into sight. They were first reported by the *Majestic*, acting as

the look-out ship, as thirty-three sail, all told. The direction of the gale, blowing nearly dead on shore and into the mouth of Cadiz harbour, held the Spaniards in check for the moment. They might have got out, it was just possible, but only with better seamanship than any Spanish admiral possessed.

“Clear’d ship for action. Form’d the line of Battle ahead. Saw 25 sail of the enemy to windward standing to the South West,”

notes the *London’s* log.

The bold front that Lord Keith made, with the *London* and her consorts all ranged in battle order, and the rough weather, daunted Admiral Bruix at the critical moment. After coming on at first, as though bent on an attack, he edged off and turned away.

“The French fleet,” says Lord Cochrane, who was a lieutenant on board the *Barfleur*, Lord Keith’s flagship, “was on the larboard tack, and our ships immediately formed on the same tack to receive them. To our surprise they soon afterwards wore and stood away to the south-west, though from our position between them and the Spaniards they had a fair chance of victory had the Combined Fleets acted in concert. According to Lord Keith’s pithily expressed opinion, we lay ‘between the devil and the deep sea!’”

The attempt, to use Lord Cochrane’s words again, “was completely frustrated by the bold interposition of Lord Keith.” It was a piece of work also that

greatly pleased his chief. "Lord Keith," wrote St. Vincent to Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, "has shown great manhood and ability before Cadiz, his position having been very critical, exposed to a hard gale of wind, blowing directly on the shore, with an enemy of superior force to windward of him, and twenty-two ships of the line in the Bay of Cadiz, ready to profit by any disaster which might have befallen him."

In the result Admiral Bruix dared not risk a battle. Instead, he stood on before the gale, heading directly to pass the Straits of Gibraltar and enter the Mediterranean.

The French fleet was sighted passing Gibraltar on the evening of the 6th, and Earl St. Vincent at once sent off messages to warn the officers in charge of his outlying squadrons: to Nelson at Naples; Captain Ball at Malta; Admiral Duckworth at Minorca; also to Sir Sidney Smith, then carrying out his heroic defence of Acre against Bonaparte in person.

Five messengers were sent off to call in Lord Keith and the fleet off Cadiz. Owing to the gale, it was impossible for a vessel to beat out through the Straits to where the *London* and her consorts were patrolling. Four of the five messengers failed. One was stopped by the Spaniards near Algeçiras. Another got to Tarifa, but disappeared there. The fourth crossed to Tangier, to try to sail over from there. He also disappeared. Then an officer in a fast-rowing captain's gig, with a picked boat's crew, tried to row round. He was beaten back, nearly swamped



in the storm, after being a night and a day at sea. In the end the order of recall only got to Lord Keith by a ruse. A passport across Spain to Lisbon was obtained for an officer going home, as an act of courtesy from the Spanish Governor at San Roque. The officer, who also spoke Spanish fluently, managed on the way to bribe a fisherman at a village near Cadiz to carry out a letter to the British fleet in sight off the harbour.

St. Vincent's orders reached Lord Keith on the 9th, three days after the French had passed the Straits. He had been cruising since the 4th on and off between Cape Spartel and Cadiz, so as not to give the Spaniards the chance of following their allies, and to be on the spot should the weather moderate and the French fleet return. In reply, the *London* and her consorts turned at once, and made for Gibraltar. They rounded into the Bay on the morning of the 10th.

St. Vincent, who had got up from a sick bed, resumed his command afloat forthwith. He re-hoisted his flag at the masthead of the *Ville de Paris* and issued orders for all to sail in pursuit of the French the instant the fleet had filled its water-casks. The watering took a day and a half, and at six on the evening of the 11th all passed out of Gibraltar Bay—sixteen sail of the line. They headed in the direction in which the enemy had been last seen—a week before—to northward, up the Spanish coast.

The pursuit of Admiral Bruix, thus begun, lasted from start to finish exactly three months, the *London*

taking her part in it throughout. It failed; although at one moment, off the Riviera, the two fleets were actually heading towards each other, almost within touch, but uncertain of each other's exact whereabouts. On another occasion, had things gone as they ought, Admiral Bruix should have been met by Lord Keith (St. Vincent's health broke down at sea and compelled him to resign the command) off Cape San Sebastian, to the north of Barcelona. In the end the French were joined by the Spaniards from Cadiz, and both fleets passed out of the Mediterranean together, heading for Brest. They arrived there, without having fired a shot all the time, in the middle of August; with the *London* and her consorts still following them, and at the last barely twenty-four hours' sail astern.

It was, from all accounts, a hard and trying time—those three months—for the “Londons” and all in the fleet. Anxiety and constant strain, hopes deferred, false reports and wasted toil, never-ceasing watchfulness all to no purpose—that was the common lot from admiral to ship's boy. Added to everything, provisions would seem to have run low before the end on board some of the ships. This is one incident which is related in regard to that. On board the flagship *Barfleur*, we are told, the gun-room officers, to stay their appetites, took to dinners off the ship's rats. “Fresh provisions being scarce in the fleet,” described one of them, “the younger officers caught the ‘millers,’ as they dubbed the huge Norway rats, fed among flour and meal sacks, and grilled

them for supper. From such clean diet these rats made nice tender food. Lord Keith, when he heard of it, gave out an order that the 'disgusting practice' must be put an end to. Soon after he dined at their mess, when 'devilled millers' were served up as young rabbits. His Lordship partook of the savoury dish, but when he found out the trick, the thought of his 'rabbit' produced the same effect on the 'old salt' as a chopping sea probably would on a landsman."

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The *London* now retransferred her services back again to the Channel Fleet, for a second tour of service on the old familiar cruising-ground off Ushant and the Penmark reefs, and amid the storm-tossed waves of the Bay of Biscay.

## XIX

### “BLACK ROCKS”—COPENHAGEN—THE *MARENGO*

**T**HREE stormy cruises off Ushant—to be beaten back to Torbay each time by a succession of fierce gales—began the *London's* new tour of service with the Channel Fleet. Then the Admiralty made an experiment with the *London* that all but lost the ship. Torbay had proved an excellent summer refuge for the fleet “observing” Brest: would the usual roadstead provide a safe winter anchorage? The *London* and the *Cæsar* were told off to ride the winter out there and try. The first January gale settled the question. It forced the *London* from her moorings, snapped the two cables that she rode by like thread, and drove her almost among the breakers inshore, until she had come within a few yards of disastrous shipwreck. Only by the captain's seamanship and the steadiness of the crew did the great three-decker escape utter destruction at the very last moment.

That was in January, 1800. In February the *London* rejoined the flag, to find herself once more under the orders of Earl St. Vincent.

The veteran chief had been brought from his sick



bed to take up the command of the Channel Fleet. A very serious situation had arisen in the fleet as the outcome of the lax disciplinary methods of Lord Bridport, who had held the command during the past five years, and had just retired owing to a temporary breakdown of health. The Admiralty had grave reason to fear that there was a deep-rooted spirit of sedition in the Channel Fleet, and it was feared even that there might be another outbreak of mutiny. At that moment Lord St. Vincent was at Bath, lying very seriously ill, but there was reason to hope he would recover. Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty, actually made a journey to Bath to see him personally in order to entreat him to undertake the command as soon as he was well enough to return to duty. There could be no doubt of the answer. "If the Government needs my services," said the old warrior, "I go. It is of no consequence to me whether I die afloat or ashore."

The disaffection in the Channel Fleet was one thing that weighed with the Admiralty. Another was the enemy. There were no fewer than forty-eight sail of the line in Brest, French and Spaniards, all reported to be in complete readiness for sea. The gravest anxiety was expressed for Ireland, and there were more rumours of a French invasion. There was need of a closer and better-sustained watch than ever off Brest, and of our very ablest admiral of sufficient rank to take charge of the Channel Fleet.

St. Vincent faced the situation with the same unbending fortitude that he had shown off Cadiz.

Before he hoisted his flag he heard how some of the officers even had received the news of his appointment with discontent and insubordinate grumblings. How far things had actually gone was shown by this, which was only one incident. At a dinner party on board the flagship of the admiral second in command, and in that officer's presence, the toast had been openly given by one of the captains, no voice of protest or rebuke being raised—"May the discipline of the Mediterranean never be introduced into the Channel Fleet!" St. Vincent smiled grimly when he heard of that. He took no notice of it. His reply was to send for the "Order books of the Mediterranean," and reissue from them at the outset the same disciplinary memoranda that he had put into force so effectively off Cadiz.

An attack on Brest was the first service planned for the Channel Fleet after the *London* joined St. Vincent's flag—a series of combined naval and military operations. A large force of soldiers was to make a landing, and a shattering blow was to be struck at the great naval arsenal of the French Atlantic seaboard. But there was no map at the War Office of the neighbouring country and the approaches to Brest; and a clumsy attempt by the military authorities to get information at Jersey "from a confidential French officer who was said to be acquainted with the place, and from a noble *émigré* there residing," only resulted in disclosing the design to the enemy. "After considerable discussion," relates Secretary Tucker, who was on

board the flagship—St. Vincent's old "*ne plus ultra* of first-rates," the *Ville de Paris*—"the point which should be assaulted was agreed upon, and with that understanding Lord St. Vincent left England. On the first day of clear weather, after he had shifted his flag, his lordship stood in with his whole force close to the entrance to Brest, silently observing through his glass the appearance of the coast; when, infinitely more to his regret than, after what had passed, to his astonishment, he saw the French throwing up powerful batteries on the identical spot on which it had been decided to land the troops! It was clear, therefore, that by some means or other Bonaparte had received accurate information of the design; the whole enterprise was therefore abandoned, and the blockade of the port became the only duty to be performed."

It was performed after St. Vincent's own plan. There was to be no more "observing" of the enemy from a rendezvous miles away at sea on the further side of Ushant. That had proved a hopeless failure. The *London* and her consorts had to do their duty henceforward on other lines. Lord St. Vincent's method was to seal the port up tightly and hold the French fleet fast inside; unable to show a bowsprit outside the harbour without bringing down the British fleet. Frigates and cutters had orders to stand to and fro day and night off the entrance to the harbour, just beyond gunshot of the shore. Five sail of the line were to cruise permanently as the Inshore Squadron, off Black Rocks,

a group of jagged reefs and surf-beaten islets that lay midway between Ushant and the harbour mouth. “New Siberia” was the sailors’ name for that part of the beat, off Black Rocks, the worst part of the station, requiring continuous drudgery and watchfulness amid treacherous currents and choppy seas by day and night. Three more ships of the line cruised between Ushant and Black Rocks to support the five. Another ship of the line and a frigate were to patrol the southern channel from Brest, the Passage du Raz. For “the team,” most of the three-deckers and heavier seventy-fours cruising to seaward, “Well in with Ushant with an easterly wind” was to be the permanent rendezvous. With a westerly wind the French could not get out. Once every night, whatever the weather, the *London* and “the team” had standing orders to go about, to tack or wear, so as to ensure their keeping ever in front of the harbour mouth.

Three times while the *London* watched off Brest did detachments of the enemy in port make attempts to slip out to sea and run the blockade; but each time they were seen and stopped.

In May came a furious storm which scattered the whole fleet far and wide : “a tremendous hurricane,” as Lord St. Vincent’s secretary spoke of it, “such as the oldest seaman had rarely remembered anywhere.” So severe did the storm become, indeed, that “Lord St. Vincent deemed it prudent to commit each ship entirely to the discretion of her officers, and he signalled the fleet to proceed to Torbay, or to



whatever port they could fetch, in disregard of the order of sailing." The great *Ville de Paris* herself, describes Mr. Tucker, "pitched and rolled like a mere plaything of the storm. One enormous sea struck her, which, beating in her stern-windows, forced its way to the admiral's cabin and tore away or upset everything, the great three-decker herself staggering awfully under the blow." On board the *Cæsar*, a big eighty-four-gun two-decker in the *London's* division, "so tremendous was the rolling of the ship that her lower yard-arms were at one time under water, while the carpenters stood by with their axes to cut the masts away if she had not righted." The *Montagu*, another of the division, was entirely dismasted. Three sloops-of-war in company turned bottom up and foundered, every man on board perishing.

The instant the weather moderated the blockade was resumed, and following on that the fleet performed a feat that the Old Navy spoke of with wonder for many a year to come. "For one hundred and twenty-one days, following that on which they reappeared off Ushant, the whole force so maintained its station that there was only one day, one of densest fog, on which the main body of the fleet did not communicate by signal with the Inshore Squadron."

The Bay of Biscay after that claimed the *London* for a cruise, whence she went off to take part in an attempt on Ferrol and the Spanish squadron lying in harbour there. A strong force of troops, eight

thousand soldiers, with sixteen field-guns, was put ashore successfully by the boats of the *London* and the other ships "without a man getting wet"; but the general in command got nervous at the sight of the Spanish fortifications and declined to attack. The troops were taken back on board, having hardly fired a shot.

In September there was another storm which drove the *London* and the rest of the Channel Fleet headlong back to Torbay; all except the Inshore Squadron. That coolly took shelter in Douarnenez Bay, on the French coast, just outside Brest harbour, and rode out the storm there—a bold stroke that confounded the enemy and frustrated the last attempt at getting out that the Brest Fleet proposed for that year.

After another cruise off Brest in force the Channel Fleet returned to Torbay<sup>1</sup> on the 19th of October,

<sup>1</sup> It was during the occasional visits of the Channel Fleet to Torbay in 1800, that Lord St. Vincent introduced his disciplinary regulations requiring post-captains to mount guard in turn at the watering-place at Brixham, and also established a three-mile limit from the landing-place for officers paying visits ashore and attending dinner-parties or balls, which was so bitterly resented in the colony of officers' wives and families, that, on Torbay becoming the regular rendezvous for the fleet watching Brest, had settled in and round the fishing village near Tor Abbey, originating, as a fact, the modern town of Torquay. One of these ladies it was, an angry captain's wife, who in an outburst of temper at the order exclaimed, "May his next glass of wine choke the wretch!" The fixing of the three-mile limit was due, as a fact, to the accident of one of St. Vincent's vice-admirals going to a ball at some little distance, on one occasion while the fleet was in Torbay. When he returned next morning he found the fleet was gone, and had to make the best of his way to Plymouth and proceed thence on a frigate, not rejoining his flagship for two days, and then off Ushant!

whereupon Earl St. Vincent left the *Ville de Paris* to take up his quarters on shore at Tor Abbey for the winter months. Thanks to his management and the care that had been taken at his special instance to preserve the men's health, in spite of the strictness with which the blockade had been maintained, and the severely trying time that all had had to endure, "there were only sixteen cases for hospital out of 23,000 men who composed the fleet." Also, in all the time since May, so efficacious had St. Vincent's precautions against mutiny and his enforcement of discipline proved, that there had not been one outbreak on board a single ship of the half-hundred and more under "the Chief's" orders. "There were but two courts-martial for breach of orders of discipline : one on a marine, whose sentence the Admiralty remitted, on supposition, it is believed, of insanity ; the other on the only seaman tried for desertion, whose punishment Lord St. Vincent remitted in compliment to the rest of his fleet."

Now we turn to another episode in the *London's* career.

Nelson's bombardment of Copenhagen in April, 1801, comes next into the *London's* story. It was from the *London*, as flagship of the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, that Nelson took his orders. From her masthead the signal was made for Nelson and the Van Division to stand in and attack the Danish batteries ; and also the historic

signal No. 39, to withdraw out of fire, which Nelson, putting his telescope to his blind eye, declined to see.

The Council of War on the 31st of March, to plan the attack on Copenhagen, was held on board the *London*. At it "Lord Nelson offered his services, requiring ten line-of-battle ships and the whole of the smaller craft. The Commander-in-Chief," says an account of what passed in the *London's* cabin, which purports to have been written by an officer who was present, "with sound discretion and in a handsome manner, not only left everything to Lord Nelson for this detached service, but gave two more line-of-battle ships than he demanded. During this council of war," proceeds the narrative, "the energy of Lord Nelson's character was remarked: certain difficulties had been started by some of the members, relative to each of the three Powers we should either have to engage, in succession or united, in those seas. The number of the Russians was in particular represented as formidable. Lord Nelson kept pacing the cabin, mortified at everything which savoured either of alarm or irresolution. When the above remark was applied to the Swedes, he sharply observed, 'The more numerous the better'; and when to the Russians, he repeatedly said, 'So much the better; I wish they were twice as many; the easier the victory, depend on it.'"

The *London*, together with the ships remaining with Sir Hyde Parker—another three-decker, Nelson's



original flagship the *St. George*, which Nelson had temporarily quitted as being of too deep draft for the shallow water in front of Copenhagen, four seventy-fours, and two sixty-fours—were all, by arrangement, to weigh anchor together at the moment that Nelson stood in. They were to menace the great Trekroner Fort, guarding Copenhagen on the northern sea-front, as well as four Danish ships of the line which covered the approach to the arsenal, besides protecting Nelson's disabled ships that might need support if they withdrew out of action. That was to have been the *London's* part. Unfortunately on the morning of the battle she was prevented from taking it. The wind and tide, while they suited Nelson, were dead against Sir Hyde Parker's ships; and after working up towards the enemy as far as they could, they had to anchor at some distance beyond gunshot. They were still between three and four miles off when the Danish flag of truce ended the battle. "It was agreed between us" (himself and Lord Nelson), wrote Sir Hyde in his official report, "that the remaining ships with me should weigh at the same moment his Lordship's did, and menace the Crown batteries and the four ships of the line that lay at the entrance of the Arsenal, as also to cover our disabled ships as they came out of action."

All on board the *London* fully expected that they had a fierce and sanguinary day before them. For that every preparation in anticipation was made; as the surgeon's journal, now at the Record Office,

testifies. It details the very complete arrangements that were made for the reception and treatment of the wounded, and the provision of bandages, dressings, and so forth. It is a curious document in itself; and more than that, as a fact, it is the only surgeon's journal out of the 2327 stored at the Record Office which deals with, or describes, the arrangements on board an old-time man-of-war in the cockpit before a battle.

Nelson and his squadron weighed anchor for the attack at half-past nine on the morning of "Bloody Monday," as the Danes called the 2nd of April, 1801. A few minutes past ten the action opened—the Danes firing the first shot. It went on without slackening for upwards of three hours.

From the quarter-deck of the *London*, we are told, the Commander-in-Chief watched the battle with constant anxiety, which became intensified after noon had passed. Nelson had told Sir Hyde Parker, it is said, that an hour would probably suffice to subdue the Danish southern defences, after which he would move up to deal with those to the north and act in co-operation with the Commander-in-Chief's squadron. It proved "a devilish long hour," to use Sir Hyde Parker's own words; and still the Danes were unsubdued. Three of Nelson's ships were ashore. They had got aground at the outset, and remained fast. The others were facing a tremendous fire from both the batteries on shore and the Danish fleet, some eighteen men-of-war, hulks, and floating batteries, all ranged in close line.

So far there was no sign of giving in among the Danes that Sir Hyde could see; no slackening on their side in the fierce and destructive cannonade that was beating down heavily on the British squadron all along its length. It was the harder to see how things were going with the Danes, for the breeze blew the smoke from Nelson's guns over the enemy's position, shrouding it entirely from view. All they could know from the *London* was that the Danish fire did not seem to be slackening, while Nelson's own time limit had long passed. Sir Hyde Parker began to fidget and get apprehensive over the risk that Nelson appeared to be incurring. He doubted the possibility of the ships with Nelson being able to stand up to the end against the severe hammering that they were plainly undergoing. Also, would Nelson be able to withdraw his damaged ships under fire, and thread his way safely through the intricate channels among the shoals in front of Copenhagen, if he had to retire before the enemy were subdued?

Anxious and uncertain as to how Nelson was faring, Sir Hyde decided at noon to send an officer to see what the situation really was in the firing line. His captain of the fleet, Captain Domett, was to have taken a message to Nelson, but he had been called below, and the captain of the *London*, Captain Robert Waller Otway, was sent instead. He had a hard row, for the last mile through a hail-storm of shot that lashed the water all round the boat into foam. He got on board Nelson's flagship the

*Elephant*, to find that the signal to discontinue the engagement had been made from the *London*, and had been received in the way that all the world now knows.

Familiar as the story is of what passed on board Nelson's flagship when the signal to cease action was received, it may, all the same, be permissible here to recall it, as it has been related at first hand, in the words of an officer who was on the quarter-deck with Nelson at the time and close by his side, Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart of the Rifle Brigade, detachments of which corps were acting as marines on board the *London* and in Nelson's flagship.

"Lord Nelson was at the time, as he had been during the whole action, walking the starboard side of the quarter-deck, sometimes much animated, and at others heroically fine in his observations. A shot through the mainmast knocked a few splinters about us. He observed to me with a smile, 'It is warm work, and this day may be the last to any of us at a moment'; and then, stopping short at the gangway, he used an expression never to be erased from my memory, and said with emotion, 'But, mark you, I would not be elsewhere for thousands!'"

"When the signal from the *London*, No. 39, was made," continues Colonel Stewart, "the signal lieutenant reported it to him. He continued his walk, and did not appear to take notice of it. The lieutenant, meeting his lordship at the next turn, asked whether he should repeat it (by which, if done,



the squadron engaged would retire to the northward)? Lord Nelson answered, 'No; acknowledge it.' On the officer returning to the poop, his lordship called after him, 'Is No. 16 (for close action) still hoisted?' The lieutenant answering in the affirmative, Lord Nelson said, 'Mind you keep it so.' He now walked the deck considerably agitated, which was always known by his moving the stump of his right arm. After a turn or two he said to me in a quick manner, 'Do you know what is shown on board the Commander-in-Chief?—No. 39.' On asking him what that meant, he answered, 'Why, to leave off action! Leave off action!' he repeated; and then added, with a shrug, 'Now damn me if I do!' He also observed, I believe, to Captain Foley, 'You know, Foley, I have only one eye—I have a right to be blind sometimes'; and then, with an archness peculiar to his character, putting the glass to his blind eye, he exclaimed, 'I really do not see the signal!'"

Sir Hyde Parker, it is stated, "hoisted the signal to discontinue action, intending it, however, not as a positive order so much as an authority to Nelson to withdraw in case such a measure should appear to him to be advisable." It "was read by Nelson as Parker intended it to be read." In the words of the Commander-in-Chief's secretary, Dr. Scott, who was with Sir Hyde on board the *London* all through, "it had been arranged between the admirals that, should it appear that the ships which were engaged were suffering too severely, the signal for retreat





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should be made to give Lord Nelson the option of retiring if he thought fit."

Between one o'clock and half-past the Danish resistance began visibly to weaken. By two, firing had practically ceased along the southern half of the enemy's line, but the cannonade was kept up vigorously from the northern batteries and the Trekroner Fort; which had suffered little from the British ships so far. Then it was that Nelson sent in a flag of truce with his letter to the Crown Prince, addressed "To the Brothers of Englishmen, the Brave Danes"; after which firing ceased for the day all along the line.

During the battle a number of the "Londons" in the ship's boats rendered good service under fire in helping to get one of the stranded ships, the *Russell*, afloat, and also in boarding and securing Danish men-of-war that surrendered.

Captain Otway, of the *London*, himself next day personally added one of the Danish ships, the *Holstein*, to the British fleet as a prize, by a clever and daring ruse. The *Holstein* was lying under the Trekroner batteries. Her ensign had been shot away, but as her pennant still flew the Danish officers refused to give her up. The pennant, they declared, showed that they had not surrendered. Two British officers had been sent on board to demand the ship, but were curtly rebuffed. Then the captain of the *London* was sent. The truce of the day before still lasted, but Nelson's squadron had worked out of range and had rejoined the fleet,



which was lying at anchor three miles off. When Captain Otway reached the *Holstein* the Danes were at work warping the ship inside the dockyard gates into the basin. As the boat came alongside he told his coxswain to get into the main-chains quietly, and then climb up to the maintop and haul down the pennant and bring it into the boat. The man did so, unnoticed in the general confusion on board. Meanwhile Captain Otway went down into the cabin to see the captain and repeat the demand. The same answer as before was given. The *Holstein* had not surrendered, declared the Danish captain. In proof of it her pennant was still flying. Otway took the captain of the *Holstein* outside by way of answer. He pointed out that the pennant was not there. The Dane was staggered at the sight. Before he recovered himself the captain of the *London* had hailed a small British vessel that was assisting in getting the prizes off, the *Eling*. He ordered her to cut the *Holstein's* cable at once and signal to the fleet for assistance. That was done so smartly that before the Danes understood what was happening the *Holstein* was in tow and being carried off.

The *London* continued under Nelson's orders after Sir Hyde Parker's recall to England, and throughout the Baltic cruise. Owing to the assassination of the Tsar Paul, she did not have an opportunity of meeting the Russian fleet or even of exchanging shots with the Cronstadt forts. After that, in the autumn, the *London* went back to the Channel Fleet

to serve once more with "the team" in sight of Ushant, until the cessation of hostilities came about with the signing of the Treaty of Amiens.

Trafalgar, had things gone as proposed, would have been a day in the *London's* battle record. She was to have been one of Nelson's fleet, and Nelson, up to the last, undoubtedly, counted on her being with him. In August, 1805, Vice-Admiral Sir John Duckworth was appointed to replace Vice-Admiral Calder in the fleet off Cadiz. Calder, it had been decided, was to return to England to stand his trial by court-martial for failing to bring the French Admiral Villeneuve to decisive action in the battle off Cape Finisterre in July. The *London* was fixed upon as Admiral Duckworth's flagship, and her name, with that of her admiral, was on the list of reinforcements he might count on, which Nelson took out with him when he left England to assume charge off Cadiz.

Wrote Nelson on the 8th of October: "Sir John Duckworth comes out in the *London*"; and, making sure that the *London* would join before the expected battle, Nelson permitted Calder to sail for England, taking away with him one of the finest three-deckers in his fleet. It was, as Nelson knew, a dangerous weakening of his fleet in the face of the numerical preponderance of the enemy at Cadiz, but the coming out to him of a fine three-decker like the *London* would, he counted, fill the gap. As things unfortu-

nately turned out, however, the *London* was unable to leave England until some days after Trafalgar had been fought and won.

The capture of the French Admiral Linois' flagship, the *Marengo*, on the 13th of March, 1806, closes the battle record of the *London* of George the Third's Navy.

After conducting a campaign against English commerce in the Indian Ocean, Admiral Linois, with the *Marengo*, an eighty-gun ship, and a forty-gun frigate, the *Belle Poule*, was on his way home, when the *London*, with the *Foudroyant*, *Ramillies*, and the frigate *Amazon*, came across him off the Cape de Verde Islands. A celebrated admiral of the time, Sir John Borlase Warren, a veteran of many battles, who in his crowded life found time also to be a Winchester scholar, an M.A. of Cambridge, and British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, was in command of the British squadron. This is the story of the fight from the *London's* log:—

“Thursd., Mar. 13, 1806.—At 3 saw 2 sail to the N.E., made all sail and gave chase: made the Signal to the Adml. with false fires and blew lights, with 3 Rockets. At half past 5, came up and engaged at pistol-shot distance, sometimes much nearer, a Line of Battle Ship and a French frigate, which was returnd. At daylight saw our fleet to the S.W., dis. 3 or 4 leag. The Enemy endeavoured to escape; we fired several shot and broadsides as we could

bring the guns to beare : at half past 8 the *Amazon* engaged the Frigate; at 9 the *Ramillies* and Squadron coming up she struck ; proved to be the *Marengo*, 80 guns, and *Bell Poul* [*sic*] of 44 guns, struck to the *Amazon*. Musterd the Ship's company : found 8 men killed, and 22 men wounded."

The final surrender was made by the French admiral to the *Ramillies*, a ship that had actually not fired a shot at him, but was the only one of the rest of the squadron to reach the scene of battle before the end.

A midshipman of the *Ramillies*, in a letter home, describes what he saw, after they first heard the sound of distant cannon and saw the horizon lighted up by the flashes of the firing.

"At 4 o'clock all hands were called : we waited with impatience until daylight appeared ; then we saw from the masthead the *London* engaging a French line-of-battle ship and a frigate. The signal was instantly made for a general chase ; our little ship being a prime sailer, came first up to the combatants, when the frigate made sail and endeavoured to get away from her companion, but the *Amazon* frigate, of 36 guns, who had all the time stuck close to her, followed her, and as she passed the enemies' line-of-battle ship poured a broadside into her, as an English salute on such occasions. In a short time she came up with the French frigate, which, after a sharp engagement, at last struck to the *Amazon*. She proves to be the *Belle Poule*, of 40 guns, and one of Admiral Linois' squadron. By this time we



were coming very near to the *London* and her opponent; we beat to quarters, and double-shotted our guns, and as we were about passing the *London*, who had most nobly sustained a severe conflict, she bore up a little and fired another broadside into the enemy, then cheered us as we passed. We returned the compliment, and immediately got between the French ship and them. The enemy fired but one shot at us in that situation, which we did not return, as our orders were not to fire until we came within pistol-shot, and when we had just attained our proper distance, I have the honour to say she immediately struck to us, seeing all further resistance vain; the last broadside from the *London* having made such havoc amongst her men, as having killed or wounded above twenty by that fire alone. We immediately lowered our boat, and our first lieutenant went on board, who took possession and hailed us. The ship taken was the *Marengo*, Admiral Linois, from the East Indies, who was then on board, and severely wounded in the leg, and his first Captain having lost his right arm. The total number of the killed and wounded on board the enemy I believe to be about 150: I am sorry to say a number are dangerously so, and dying fast."

It is a rather curious coincidence that the *London*, whose part as flagship of the Baltic Fleet at the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1801, has been recorded, was to have been flagship of the Baltic Fleet at the second bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807. "The *London*," wrote Admiral Gambier, the Commander-

in-Chief, in July of that year, to one of his captains, explaining why he had to hoist his flag on board another ship, "was ordered for the service in the Baltic, but she could not be got ready in time."

\* \* \* \* \*

The *London* was afterwards engaged in the blockade of the Tagus under Sir Sidney Smith, in 1807. She was present when, on the 29th of November, the King and Queen of Portugal and the Royal Family took refuge afloat on board the British fleet. That was just as Marshal Junot entered Lisbon. The *London*, following on that, was one of the squadron which escorted the royal refugees to Brazil, in those times Portugal's great Transatlantic possession, and she was, it was remarked at the time, the first three-decker that had ever crossed the Equator.

On her return from three years' service across the Atlantic, the old *London*, after being forty-five years afloat, went to the ship-breakers in 1811.

## XX

### FACING THE BATTERIES OF SEBASTOPOL

THE last of our *Londons* of the old order was one of Sir William Symonds' finest designs, a magnificent ninety-gun two-decker, built at Chatham and sent afloat in October, 1840. Her launch was long remembered for the brilliant assemblage that graced it. "It was," the newspapers said, "the grandest launch ever seen at Chatham." Collingwood's old first lieutenant at Trafalgar, Clavell, was in charge as Captain-Superintendent of the dockyard. Admiral Sir Henry Digby, Commander-in-Chief at the Nore, another Trafalgar veteran; Sir Charles Adam, First Sea-Lord, who had seen George the Third's *London* capture the *Marengo*, and a score of other veterans who had formerly served as midshipmen or lieutenants in company with the old ship; Dr. Beatty, the *Victory's* surgeon at Trafalgar; were among those present on the occasion. There was also present, a rare sort of visitor at such a ceremony, the poet Campbell, the author of *Ye Mariners of England* and *The Battle of the Baltic*. He described the spectacle of the *London* taking the water as "one

of the sublimest objects of artificial life." By way of associating the ship with the City, the *London* bore for her figurehead a bust of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, as she appeared in her twenty-second year, wearing a crown carved to represent the White Tower of the Tower of London.<sup>1</sup>

A very fine-looking vessel of 2598 tons—3580 tons displacement—was the *London*; with a complement of 850 officers and men; carrying in her magazines 347 tons 17 cwt. of powder, shot, and shell; firing a broadside weight of metal of 6652 lb. at each discharge; and costing £90,000. Her lower-deck ports stood six feet clear of the water, and with all sail set she showed an area of 28,100 square feet of canvas.

An incident of an unusual nature marked the *London's* entry into service. In the summer of 1851 she was commissioned as "stationary" or non-sea-going flagship at Sheerness, with the flag of Admiral the Hon. Joscelyn Percy, Commander-in-Chief at the Nore. A few weeks afterwards, the *Waterloo*, a very fine first-rate, never before employed, was also commissioned at Sheerness and fitted out at exceptional expense, three-quarters of the dockyard establishment being at work on her, to serve as

<sup>1</sup> A new *London*, intended as a first-rate, a 120-gun three-decker, was laid down at Plymouth in the year before the battle of Waterloo; but the date of her launch happening to coincide with a visit to the West of the Duke of Clarence, then Lord High Admiral, with the Duchess, the ship's name was altered at the last moment to *Royal Adelaide*. She was the same *Royal Adelaide* which was so long port-admiral's flagship at Plymouth, and was afterwards found employment at Chatham as a depôt ship, whence she passed only a year or two ago to the ship-breaker.



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flagship in the Mediterranean. The *Waterloo* was to replace the *Queen*, and also to carry out the new Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, Vice-Admiral Dundas. Suddenly, after the *Waterloo* had been for many weeks preparing, and when she was within ten days of being ready for sea, the entire ship's company of the *London*, including the admiral and all the officers and men, were, by a fresh Admiralty order, transferred to the *Waterloo*, whose own picked crew were moved bodily into the older and smaller *Britannia*, now designated as the Mediterranean flagship in the place of the *Waterloo*. The *Waterloo*, at the same time, was officially announced to be "defective," and was appointed as "stationary flagship" at Sheerness in place of the *London*, which was in turn transferred to the Channel Fleet as an "Advanced Ship for Service at Sea," in the official phraseology of the day. The affair mystified everybody at Sheerness. Not a whisper had ever been heard of anything being the matter with the *Waterloo*.

What had happened—it leaked out some years later—is an extraordinary and unworthy story. A fortnight before the Admiralty order was drafted Louis Napoleon had carried out the *Coup d'Etat* of the 2nd of December, 1851. Startled, and in a fit of nerves lest the sending out at that moment of a flagship so named might give umbrage to the new ruler of France, Lord John Russell's Ministry requested the Admiralty to keep back the *Waterloo* and employ her on non-seagoing service only.

Would it be possible also, it was suggested, to give the ship a new name? Of course the wishes of the Cabinet had to be considered, and as a result the *Waterloo* remained in port—which she never afterwards left. The Admiralty went no further, however; they did not change the ship's name. That another Board did later on—for other reasons. Some years afterwards—in 1862—the *Waterloo* was ordered by the Admiralty to be renamed. *Conqueror* was the new name announced for the ship, to replace on the Navy List, as it was given out, a man-of-war called the *Conqueror* lost off the Bahamas in 1861. That, as it happened, did lead to a protest. It came from the very quarter about which the Ministry of ten years before had shown themselves so timid. The French naval *attaché* in England, on learning of the change, is said to have angrily taken exception to it and specially called at the Admiralty to complain. “*Waterloo! Conqueror!*” he is said to have exclaimed. “*Conqueror! Mon Dieu, the change is ten thousand times worse!*” Lord Palmerston and the Duke of Somerset were, however, in office at that time and the complaint was politely put aside. Nobody dreamed of offending French susceptibilities in the matter, it was pointed out, quite the contrary; the name had simply been altered for service convenience, and could not, in the circumstances, be altered again. So the matter was left.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ex-*Waterloo*, after being the *Conqueror* for many years, became the *Warspite* on being lent to the Marine Society as a Thames training-ship for boys. She is in fact the present *Warspite* now off

One day of battle came the *London's* way. It was when serving in the Black Sea in the Crimean War. The *London* formed part of the gallant Inshore Squadron, under Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons, which made so gallant—if useless—a display by battering at the sea-front fortifications of Sebastopol on the memorable day of the grand naval attack on the fortress, the 17th of October, 1854. Captain Charles Eden was the captain of the *London* on the occasion.

The bombardment was carried out by two separate groups of ships. One, which comprised the main body of the combined British and French fleets, was under the joint command of Admirals Dundas and Hamelin, all drawn up in line to make a long-range bombardment at two thousand yards. The other was a small picked squadron, comprising the *Agamemnon*, *Sanspareil*, and *London*, ninety-one and ninety-gun ships, with the *Albion*, another ninety-one-gun ship, and the frigate *Arethusa*, under personal direction of the second in command in the British fleet, Rear-Admiral Sir Edmund Lyons. Their rôle was to attack at from six hundred to eight hundred yards, as close in as the shoals along the front of the forts and batteries on the north side of the harbour of Sebastopol would allow big ships to approach.

It had been at first decided that only two ships *Greenhithe*; and anybody who looks closely at the painted-over mouldings on her stem can easily trace the crest and motto of the Duke of Wellington under the coating of paint, as the decorations were originally affixed there.

should form the Inshore Squadron : the *Agamemnon* and the *Sanspareil*. The "Londons," however, volunteered, through their captain, for a place at the post of honour. They did this although the ship was two hundred men short of her complement, that number being on shore on duty in the trenches with the Naval Brigade. "It was at the earnest request of Captain Eden himself," says Kinglake, "that Lyons sought and obtained from Dundas permission to take the *London*."

The *London's* master had already examined the approaches in front of the Russian batteries. He was one of the three gallant volunteers, all masters, who undertook on the night before the attack to ascertain the exact limit of the shoals. They were Mr. Mainprise of the *Britannia*, the Commander-in-Chief's flagship, Mr. Noddall of the *London*, and Mr. Forbes of the *Sampson*. They "volunteered to go under the cover of darkness and endeavour to take soundings. And this they did. Approaching the shore in boats with muffled oars, they boldly penetrated within the line of the enemy's look-out boats, and although they were repeatedly hailed by the enemy, they yet by their skill and coolness succeeded in achieving their purpose." The masters of the *Britannia* and *London* went on board the *Agamemnon* together early next morning to report to the captain. "You are safe, Captain Mends," they assured him, "in running in up to six fathoms. When you get that, stop, or you will be on shore!"

The Inshore Squadron set off for their battle on



Admiral Dundas' signal "Proceed and attack the batteries." The *Agamemnon*, as Sir Edmund Lyons' flagship, led the way. Then came the *Sanspareil*, and then the *London*. The *Albion* and *Arethusa* did not follow until an hour later.

The three stood in boldly, exchanging shots with the cliff batteries as they neared, in order to shroud themselves with smoke and more or less baffle the Russian gunners, until they had reached their posts in front of Fort Constantine and the Wasp and Telegraph forts. Both the *Agamemnon* and the *Sanspareil* were steamships. The *London* was a sailing-ship, and was towed in by the *Niger*, a steam-vessel. So they went forward until the three had got as near in as it was possible to get. Then they let go anchors. The leader, the *Agamemnon*, when she brought up in five and a half fathoms, had just two feet of water between her keel and the bottom.

"Eden in the *London*," describes Kinglake, "came up in the wake of the *Sanspareil*. Anchoring close astern of her, he laid his port broadside towards the shore, and opened fire on Fort Constantine at a range of one thousand five hundred yards. So large a proportion of his crew was engaged in the land operations that, with only the numbers remaining on board his own ship, he could hardly have brought into play more than one-third part of her batteries, but having reinforced himself by taking a body of men from the *Niger* (his towing steamship) to work his upper-deck guns, he was able to put forth the

whole strength of his port broadside. He was, however, exposed to a destructive fire from the guns on the cliff, for he lay right under the Telegraph Battery, at a distance from it of less than seven hundred yards. The simple truth is that, by the destructive power of the cliff batteries on the one hand and the form of the shoal on the other, the region of comparative impunity was so narrowed as to offer no more than one berth to a great ship of war, and that berth was the one which the fortunate *Agamemnon* had taken."

Some time after the attack had opened came a great explosion among the batteries at the top of the fort, caused, it was believed, by a shell from one of the steam frigates which hovered on the off side of the squadron firing at a range of upwards of a mile.

"This disaster alone," to continue in the words of Kinglake, "must have done much to breed confusion, but it was mainly by the fire of the three great ships—the *Agamemnon*, the *Sanspareil*, and the *London*—that the result was obtained. The upper-tier batteries of Fort Constantine were brought to ruin. Of the twenty-seven guns there planted, twenty-two were speedily silenced, and the gunners found themselves so overwhelmed with shot and splinters of stone that—chiefly, it seems, by that last stress—they were driven to go down and take refuge in the casemates below. The gunners, thus driven from the top of the work, must have carried down with them to the lower batteries a consternation

approaching to panic, for during the space of ten minutes the whole fort was silent.

“But with the extermination of the top batteries and with ten minutes of silence, the power of the ships over the fort may be said to have ended, for in the lower or casemated tiers, though ten of the embrasures were more or less damaged at the cheeks, and though four out of five of the shot-heating furnaces were destroyed, the stone wall of the fort held good, and the guns all remained untouched. So decisive was the line which defined the power of the assailing ships over Fort Constantine, that what they could inflict upon the open-air batteries proved to be sheer ruin, and what they could do against the casemates turned out to be almost nothing.

“At half-past two the *Arethusa*, towed by the *Triton*, and the *Albion*, towed by the *Firebrand*, came in from the south-west. They soon afterwards took up positions astern of the *London* and opened upon the cliff defences, the *Arethusa* being then about seven hundred yards from the Telegraph Battery, and the *Albion*, as her commander reckoned it, within six hundred yards of the *Wasp*.

“When this had been done, the whole number of those ships were ranging in a single line, which ran nearly parallel with the shore, and at distances from it of from six hundred to eight hundred yards.”

The *Arethusa* and the *Albion* faced the ceaseless fire of the cliff batteries with noble courage, but in vain. They were overwhelmed by shell fire and

were both set on fire—the *Albion* three times. The *Arethusa*, further, was in grave danger of being sent to the bottom. The two had to withdraw, forced out of the line, and both terribly shattered.<sup>1</sup>

“Those guns on the cliff,” again to take up the story as Kinglake tells it, “which thus beat off and disabled the *Arethusa* and the *Albion*, were all this while inflicting great havoc upon the *London*. From the moment when the *London* cast anchor, she was under a telling fire from the Telegraph Battery; but at first, though many shots struck, there were also some which missed. After a while men gazing at the battery from the deck of the *London* saw an officer, quadrant in hand, exerting himself to obtain with mathematic exactness the proper angle of fire. After that there was no imperfection in the aim of the Russian gunners, and as soon as the *Arethusa* and the *Albion* had been disabled and beaten off, the fire from the cliff, which before had been divided in its objects, became concentrated with powerful effect upon the three remaining ships. Of these the *London* was the one which lay closest under the guns of the Telegraph Battery.

“So against that battery, as his real antagonist, Captain Eden exerted the whole power of his port broadside, but after a while he was able to assure himself of that which we now know with certainty—namely, that his ship, while sustaining a good deal

<sup>1</sup> It is this same *Arethusa*, the last survivor of the Crimean fleet, which is so well known on the lower Thames as the Homeless and Destitute Boys Training Ship off Greenhithe.



of havoc and losing men killed and wounded, was absolutely powerless against the battery. As soon as he had assured himself of this, he determined to shift the position of his ship, and with that intention sheered out. Afterwards he again stood in, and from a new position assailed Fort Constantine as well as his old foe at the Telegraph.

“The *London* lost four men killed and eighteen wounded. Amongst these last was Lieutenant Stevens. Having received an ugly wound in the head, he quickly got it bandaged, and went on with his duty as though nothing had happened to him. When recommended by Captain Eden to go below, he excused himself by setting up a theory that because his wound was quite warm it needed for the time no attention. Afterwards he got wounded in the knee; but by the help of that same theory of his, and also another bandage, he so dealt with the second casualty as to be able to go on with his duty.”

The *London's* return into the battle was to help the *Agamemnon*, which by the temporary withdrawal of the *Sanspareil*, after a fearful hammering, had for a brief space been left unsupported. She pushed in once more; with the *Bellerophon*, the *Sanspareil*, also coming back for the second time, the *Queen*, and the *Rodney*—all in response to the *Agamemnon's* signal, “that favourite ‘Number thirteen,’ which says to the captains who see it, ‘Close the enemy and engage for mutual support!’” The *Bellerophon* and the *Queen* had both, after making a splendid fight

and being each in turn greeted by the admiral as they came up with the signal "Well done, *Bellerophon!*" and "Well done, *Queen!*" to sheer out of action, on fire. The *Rodney*, whose approach to help had also won the same public acknowledgment "Well done, *Rodney!*" on entering the battle, had got aground. The *London* remained until the end, when the *Agamemnon* herself hauled off, slipping one cable and cutting the other, "delivering a farewell fire as she passed at the cliff batteries and then going out of range." "The *Sanspareil*," says Kinglake, "followed the *Agamemnon*, and the *London* too went out of action."

Owing to the shoal water, half a mile was practically the nearest that any of the British ships could get. When, after three or four hours' cannonading, the Inshore Squadron and the ships helping them drew off out of range, the Russian forts were "as strong as if a shot had never been fired against them." This is what an eyewitness said describing the effects of the bombardment on the walls of Fort Constantine: "Where several shots have struck in the same place, the granite is splintered and broken away to the depth of about a foot or less. Where only one or two balls have struck, there are mere whitish marks, as if the spot had been dabbed with flour."

The *London's* contingent with the Naval Brigade continued on shore, serving in the trenches for ten months after that, remaining at the front to the end of the siege. Some of them were with the advanced

scaling parties and took part in the land attack at the disastrous assault on the Redan. One of the *London's* officers, Mr. Kennedy, a mate, was one of those left behind wounded when the soldiers retreated. He lay for several hours concealed among the dead, until at length getting clear, he rolled himself over and over down the declivity and managed to get into the trench.

The bombardment of Sebastopol was the last battle at which a *London* man-of-war took part.

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The old Crimean veteran, the last of our "wooden-wall" *Londons*, passed away at Zanzibar in 1884, after serving there for ten years as depôt ship and head-quarters afloat for the naval force employed in the suppression of the slave trade on the East African coast.

It was, as a fact, while captain of the *London* on the East African coast that the gallant Captain Brownrigg met his death, on the 13th of December, 1881. He was patrolling for slavers off Pemba in the *London's* steam pinnace with ten men, when he fell in with a suspicious-looking Arab dhow. She was flying French colours, but Captain Brownrigg decided to inspect her papers. It was a common practice with the slavers to hoist French colours at the sight of a British man-of-war flag. Apparently, as it would seem, Captain Brownrigg did not anticipate hostility. He approached and closed alongside quite confidently, whereupon the Arabs on board the

dhaw seized the chance for making a treacherous attack. They fired a volley into the pinnace as it drew alongside, and followed that up instantly by jumping down into it and attacking the little party hand to hand. The surprise was complete. The British crew in the boat were either cut down at once or forced overboard. Only Captain Brownrigg made any real resistance. He seized a rifle, shot one of his assailants dead, and then, standing in the stern-sheets, with the clubbed weapon fought the Arabs man for man, keeping them at bay in spite of some twenty wounds that he received, two at least of which it was found later must have proved mortal. He kept up his fight to the last, until he fell dead with a bullet through the heart. Three of Captain Brownrigg's men shared his fate, and three others were badly wounded. In the end the Arabs allowed the pinnace to drift away, and as she did so the survivors of her crew in the water regained her, and at length got back to the *London*, bringing the captain's body with them.



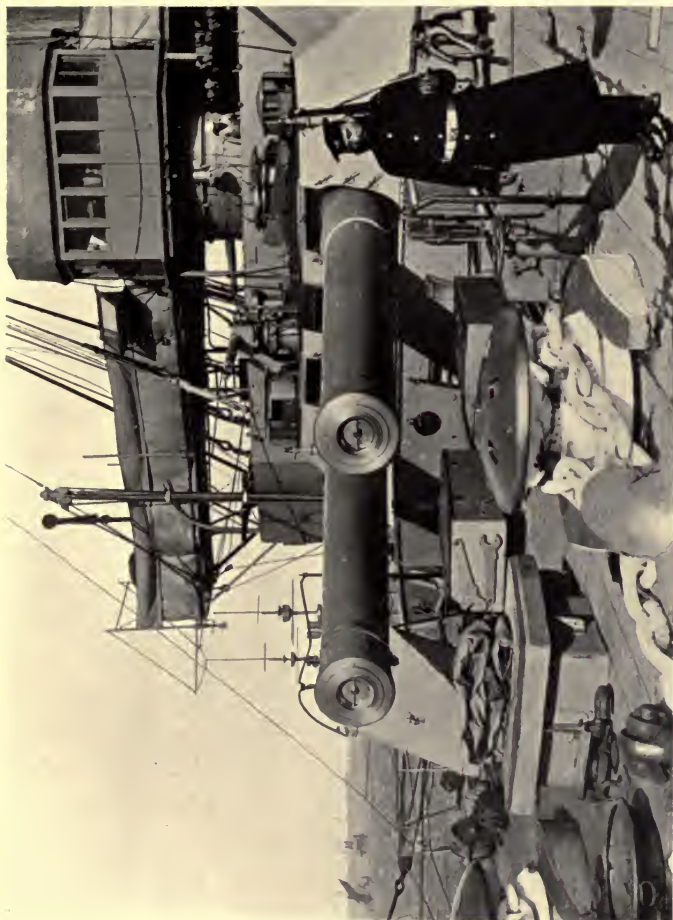
## XXI

### THE "FIGHTING WEIGHT" OF KING EDWARD'S *LONDON*

**T**HE fine battleship the *London* of our modern armour-clad fleet, now under Lord Charles Beresford's command in the Channel Fleet, was built under the late Lord Goschen's naval programme for 1898 as one of the three first-class battleships to be laid down in that year in circumstances referred to in our opening chapter.

The *London* made her first public appearance at sea as the flagship of the great fleet assembled at Spithead in July, 1902, for King Edward's Coronation Review. After that she joined the Mediterranean Fleet, and served there under the orders of Sir John Fisher, Admiral Domvile, and Lord Charles Beresford, until, in March of last year (1907) the *London* was recalled to join the new Home Fleet. Thence she has now been passed into the Channel Fleet, the first and most powerful of all Great Britain's war fleets, with which the *London* is now, as flagship of the third in command, serving once more under Lord Charles Beresford.

Certain "points" of our battleship the *London* of



H.M. BATTLESHIP LONDON:—FORE TURRET, WITH 50-TON 12-INCH GUNS; ALSO THE CONNING TOWER AND BRIDGE



to-day may be taken briefly, by way of giving some idea of what the ship is like, and of what may be called her "fighting weight."

With all her ammunition on board, bunkers full of coal, and sea stores in, the *London* weighs—or displaces in equivalent bulk of sea water according to the present-day method of reckoning the size of men-of-war—15,000 tons. She cost to build over a million sterling (exactly £1,031,355), with a detail of just over a hundred thousand pounds in addition for her guns and equipment.

Her annual cost is approximately as follows:—

|   | £       |
|---|---------|
| Interest on first cost . . . . .                | 30,000  |
| Depreciation (for a life of 25 years) . . . . . | 40,000  |
| Crew . . . . .                                  | 40,000  |
| Victualling . . . . .                           | 14,500  |
| Coal . . . . .                                  | 23,500  |
| Stores and Repairs . . . . .                    | 9,500   |
| Ordnance Stores . . . . .                       | 5,500   |
| Total . . . . .                                 | 163,000 |

It is a large sum of money, no doubt; but we spend large sums on other things. Twelve millions sterling, for instance, it has been estimated, is spent in the British Isles every year on golf; sixteen thousand pounds goes in one afternoon for the pleasure of looking on at a "Cup Final."

Measured from ram to rudder the *London's* hull extends over all 430 feet; from side to side, amidships, the *London* measures 75 feet.

The armour belt on her sides is of Krupp steel,



9 inches thick and 15 feet in depth. Nine inches of Krupp steel (named from the inventor of the process for hardening the metal) has a resisting power equal to two feet of solid wrought iron. The armour covers rather more than a third of the surface of the ship's side above water—about 4500 square feet out of about 12,000 square feet over all. In the *London* the armour extends to the bows, becoming thinner by degrees, until it is only three inches thick where it joins the ram, a steel forging which weighs by itself some five-and-thirty tons. The thicker armour plates are each as big as a billiard table (a yard longer in reality), and there are some seventy of them in all, protecting the vitals of the ship. Five of these plates, put in the scales, would outweigh the largest express railway engine.

For her guns, the *London* mounts as her "main armament" four 50-ton 12-inch turret guns, carried in pairs in two barbettes heavily armoured with plates of 12-inch steel. Each gun costs £9500. It fires shells weighing 850 lb. or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  cwt. each, and the "cartridge" or firing charge of modified or "M.D." cordite, as it is called, weighs by itself two hundredweight—the weight of a sack of coals as delivered from a street coal-cart. Two aimed shots a minute are possible from each gun in battle, costing the taxpayer £80 a shot, including cartridge and projectile. The *London* carries in her magazine eighty rounds per gun.

The "muzzle velocity" of the gun—the speed at which the shot travels as it flashes forth on its errand

of destruction—is 2526 feet, or nearly half a mile a second. The force with which the shot starts off is enough to send it clean through a slab of wrought iron, set up immediately in front of the muzzle of the gun, a yard and three inches thick. When fired with a full charge, the force set up—the “muzzle energy” of the gun, as it is called—one gun by itself, is sufficient to heave one foot up in the air a weight of 37,600 tons; a weight equal to two *Londons* plus two cruisers like the *Royal Arthur* or *St. George* together. Fired together, the *London's* four turret 12-inch guns exert a force sufficient to lift up the ship herself ten feet. At two miles—the distance, as the crow flies, from the Houses of Parliament to the Tower—a shot from one of the *London's* 12-inch guns would go through twelve inches of Krupp steel, or two feet and a half of wrought iron, as easily as a stone from a catapult goes through a glass window.

This may help to give a notion of the tremendous energy let loose when one of the *London's* 12-inch guns is fired. The recoiling weight of each of the four great turret guns is just over sixty tons—a mass equivalent in weight to a giant express railway locomotive. When the gun fires it starts back at a velocity of from 26 feet to 28 feet a second, or from 18 to 20 miles an hour. It is checked by a hydraulic cylinder within a yard, which is equivalent to bringing the express engine referred to when going at twenty miles an hour to a dead stop within the same space. The weight of turret armour and turret structure and

the two guns, the weight available to absorb this enormous force, is about 450 tons. The whole weight of the two guns of each pair, with their mountings, turret, and barbette, the circular base which contains and protects the lower portion of the turret machinery, weighs about 800 tons. All this will give an idea of the titanic powers and forces to be reckoned with in dealing with the armament of a modern battleship.

To give some idea of the tremendous range that the *London's* guns can hit at. Imagine one of them mounted in front of the Royal Exchange to fire with full charges in any direction. Its shells could make Hampton Court Palace a mass of blazing ruins within three minutes; or, deal havoc and death among the Derby Day crowds on Epsom Downs. Firing from Richmond Hill, Windsor Castle would be in danger.

They are "wire guns," as the term goes, constructed in each case by winding coil on coil of steel ribbon or "tape" (a quarter of an inch wide and .06 of an inch thick) round and round the central steel tube, exactly as the string is wound round on the handle of a cricket bat. There are fourteen layers over the muzzle end and seventy-five over the breech. The tape or "wire" is covered by outer "jackets" or cylinders of steel. Upwards of 206,130 yards of wire—a length of 117 miles—weighing some  $13\frac{1}{2}$  tons, are required for each of the *London's* 12-inch guns, and it takes from three to four weeks to wind on the wire. The rifling of the barrel comprises forty-eight grooves, varying in depth

from .08 of an inch at the muzzle to .1 at the breech. Each of the *London's* guns, separately, employs in its manufacture, from first to last, upwards of five hundred men in various capacities.

For her secondary armament the *London* mounts twelve 6-inch guns of an improved type, each gun capable of firing from six to ten 100-pounder shells in a minute, and with a range of from seven to ten thousand yards, equivalent to the distance between Charing Cross and Richmond. The guns are in armoured casemates, eight on the main deck and four on the upper deck. Sixteen 12-pounder quick-firers, besides 3-pounders and Maxims as anti-torpedo guns, to sink or stop hostile torpedo boats, complete the *London's* armament, and she has in addition four 18-inch torpedo tubes, discharging 30-knot torpedoes, each carrying 200 lb. of gun-cotton as its explosive, and starting off through the water at something like thirty miles an hour, to range up to four thousand yards, not far off two miles and a half.

The force exerted by the *London's* guns in five minutes of rapid firing would be enough to lift 242,000 tons ten feet into the air, and the "weight of metal" hurled at the enemy in the time would be about twenty-seven tons of shells.

The *London*, of course, is not a *Dreadnought*. She had served her first commission before ever the first of the *Dreadnought's* keel-plates had been laid on the blocks, but she is all the same a very powerful ship, capable of facing any foreign battleship afloat



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at the present time, or likely to be in existence, at  
any rate, for the next two years.

This will give some idea of how the *London's* guns  
would get to work on the day of battle.

In the Royal Navy a captain, on commissioning  
his ship, is furnished with memoranda laying down  
in general terms the ranges at which fire may be  
opened in action by each battery or type of guns.  
First, the battle lies with the heavy armour-piercing  
long-range guns in the turrets or barbettes. Then  
the larger quick-firers in the casemates and in the  
central battery take it up. After that, as these in  
turn get the enemy within their range, the smaller  
quick-firers mounted on the superstructure and else-  
where get their opportunities. The part of the  
enemy's ship at which each class of gun should aim,  
as the opposing ships close and the enemy becomes  
more and more clearly visible, is also suggested.  
The marks or targets to be aimed at are changed as  
the range for each set of guns becomes closer.

First of all the *London's* big 12-inch guns would  
open a long-range fire, with the aid of the range-  
finders on board, taking the hull of the enemy's  
ship as their general target. Firing would begin  
from five to six miles off, from 8000 to 10,000 yards.  
Imagine, that is, an imaginary *London* near the  
Tower, or the Bank of England, letting fly shells,  
each weighing rather less than half a ton, at an  
enemy as far off as Earl's Court or Shepherd's



H.M. BATTLESHIP *LONDON*;—ROYAL NAVAL RESERVISTS AT GUNNERY INSTRUCTION



Bush. The shells would come hurtling down a steep angle of descent on to the decks of the ship aimed at, smashing through and carrying widespread havoc inside, with their bursting charges of shattering lyddite. The *London's* guns can carry beyond that range easily, and the range-finder does the rest. As to the abilities of our seamen gunners, two years ago the men of the battleship *Commonwealth*, at target practice at 8000 yards, nearly five miles, dropped shell after shell on to the target, and the shots all fell within a space the size of a lawn-tennis court. In that case the target represented the hull of an ordinary ship of war, a rectangle some 400 feet long, a ship's length, by about 25 feet, the height of an average ship out of the water. There is not much to be seen of a ship, it may be imagined, at that range. Even at a distance as near as 2000 yards—a mile and a quarter—a ship of the size of the *London* would look no bigger than a wax match does, held up horizontally about a foot off in front of the eye.

As the ships got nearer in battle, the *London's* heavy guns would take aim at certain known, or readily distinguished, features of the hostile ship, such as the turrets or barbettes, and the conning-tower. Getting nearer still, they would transfer their aim on certain other parts, such as the bases of the funnels and of the masts, while the bigger quick-firers, now beginning to come into range, would take up the marks or "targets" originally allotted to the big guns, pouring in their streams of 100-pounder



shells on what might remain intact of the parts of the hostile vessel already fired at by the big guns. Getting closer still, the turret guns would aim at the armoured waterline of the enemy, while the heavier quick-firers, in like manner, would leave their earlier "targets" to be dealt with by the smaller quick-firers as these found their ranges, and so on, unless exceptional conditions necessitated other steps.

Each class of gun has at the outset its distinct target or mark suggested for it—the smaller quick-firers being told off, as soon as they can get "on" the enemy, to riddle the unarmoured parts of the ship and gun positions with a hail of projectiles, as Togo did with such deadly effect at Tsushima. At 8000 yards one set of objects is suggested; at 6000 yards another; at 4000 yards another; and so on, until the ship comes within 3000 yards, the limit when torpedoes come into play, and other conditions have to be allowed for. In the final stages, when between 4000 and 2000 yards, the firing would be at whatever parts of an enemy's ship the officers thought best at the moment; practically each set of guns would attack the corresponding guns of the same class on board the enemy, big guns fighting big guns, and so on.

Special arrangements are made to keep the enemy under continuous observation from the "control top," a hundred and twenty feet above the deck, whence information of damage to the enemy, corrections of range, notice of torpedoes the enemy may be seen to fire, and any important change of course

or movement on the enemy's part, or any special signals, are instantly telegraphed or telephoned to the conning-tower, or to whatever other "fighting station" the captain may be occupying. From the "control top," also, wires lead down to the turrets and the 6-in. gun casemates, to indicate, by means of a variety of electrical instruments, every momentary alteration of range to the gun-layers at every individual gun all over the ship.

All ships are supplied with official handbooks containing carefully detailed elevation plans of innumerable foreign warships which they may have to meet in war, with their distinctive features clearly indicated, and the armoured and unarmoured parts of the ship shown, together with the nature of the armour, and the gun positions and calibre of each gun.

At this point we finally part company with the *London* man-of-war, and the story and annals of the name at sea. We can safely trust the honour of our country's flag and the City's name to the keeping of those who man the *London*, absolutely assured that they will do all that men may do to uphold them against all enemies, whomsoever those may be; even should in their time the inevitable war break out and the call come for the *London* to bear her part

On the day of Armageddon,  
When the North Sea tides run blood.



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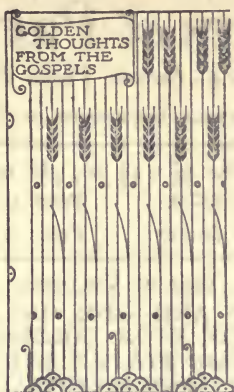
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